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A new collection of poems by LOUIS SIMPSON will be published by Wesleyan University Press in the fall.

VERNON YOUNG, who is now in Salzburg, is planning to move to Italy, where he will work on a book about the movies.

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LEONARD B. MEYER

The End of the Renaissance?

Notes on the Radical Empiricism of the Avant-Garde

I

NO ASPECT OF CONTEMPORARY ART has received so much publicity and so much attention from critics, professional and amateur, as the fact that it is often created by accidental or random means. Nor have the artists themselves discouraged such publicity—the storms of protest, the raillery, and the cries of outraged anguish. For, after all, notoriety, even when based on misunderstanding, is perhaps better than neglect.

While the use of random techniques in the plastic arts has received more publicity, the use of chance in music has been much clearer and more systematic. For though Jackson Pollock dripped his paint on a canvas from a considerable height and the French painter, Mathieu, hurls paint at his canvas from a safe distance, one cannot be sure how much was *really* accidental and how much was governed by an inspired spontaneity—an unconscious control of line, color, and texture arising out of the artists' past training and discipline.

In the composition of music no such doubts arise. For here chance procedures have been employed explicitly and systematically. This has been done in three basic ways: In the first, the composer uses a technique for randomization to create a fully written-out score. As John Cage put it:

Those involved with the composition of experimental music find ways and means to remove themselves from the activities of the sounds they make. Some employ chance operations derived from sources as ancient as the Chinese *Book of Changes* or as modern as tables of random numbers used also by physicists in research. Or, analogous to the Rorschach tests of psychology, the interpretation of imperfections in the paper upon which one is writing may provide a music free from one's memory and imagination.¹

In the second way of randomizing music, the composer merely

¹ *Silence* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan Univ. Press, 1961), pp. 10-11.

indicates, by means of a graph or schematic drawing, approximate pitches, time relationships, textures, dynamics, and so forth. The realization of this "score" is left to the performer or, if there is an ensemble, the performers. This method has been used by the Italian composer, Sylvano Bussotti, and the U. S. composers, Morton Feldman and John Cage. Peter Gradenwitz describes the score of Bussotti's *Piano Piece for David Tudor* as consisting of "a line-drawing made up of straight and curved lines, arrows, vertical and diagonal signs of direction, ornaments, and so forth. This drawing is to inspire the pianist to whom the composer leaves every freedom to interpret the 'signs' of the 'score'."² Where several players are involved in such a performance, the result may be random indeed. For not only are the particular pitches and the precise time relationships not stipulated in the parts played by the performers but, since these are indeterminate, their synchronization is also random. The coincidence of pitches is purely accidental. The third way of creating so-called indeterminate music is somewhat less random. In this case the composer writes down in detail several separate snippets of music, each lasting for only a few seconds. But the order in which these snippets is played is left to the whim of the performer. Karlheinz Stockhausen's *Piano Piece No. 11* is an example of such a work. Here are Stockhausen's instructions to the pianist:

The performer looks at random at the sheet of music and begins with any group, the first that catches his eye; this he plays, choosing for himself tempo . . . dynamic level, and type of attack. At the end of the first group, he reads the tempo, dynamic, and attack indications that follow, and looks at random to any other group, which he then plays in accordance with the latter indications.

"Looking at random to any other group" implies that the performer will never link up expressly-chosen groups or intentionally leave out others.

Each group can be joined to any of the other 18: each can thus be played at any of the six tempi and dynamic levels and with any of the six types of attack . . .

When a group is arrived at for the third time, one possible realization of the piece is completed. This being so, it may come about that certain groups are played once only or not at all.³

Random or indeterminate music must be distinguished from

² "The Performer's Role in the Newest Music," *Chesterian*, Vol. 34, No. 200, p. 62.

³ *Klavierstücke XI*, (London: Universal Edition, 1957).

electronic music and from computer music. Electronic music is simply music composed *directly* on tape. That is, the composer begins with either natural sounds or those produced by a frequency oscillator, puts them on tape and then by rerecording these sound fragments at faster or slower tempi, higher or lower pitches, louder or softer volumes, backwards or forwards, upside down, and so forth, constructs a piece of music. Such a work may involve chance elements or it may be completely pre-planned. In other cases a pre-planned set of time, pitch, volume, and tone-color relationships activated by an electronic mechanism may be put directly on tape. This kind of music has been written by Stockhausen, Boulez, Luciano Berio, Milton Babbitt and others. Though the composition of "computer music" often *begins* with a series of random numbers corresponding to a series of pitches, the finished piece is not usually random. In computer music a set of rules or instructions—they might be the rules for writing a Bach fugue (if we really knew those well enough) or the rules for writing a popular tune—are fed into a computer which, following these instructions, selects appropriate notes from the random series and thus "composes" a piece of music. Depending upon the nature of the instructions fed into the computer, the compositions it produces can be either highly determined or completely random.

In discussing works of art, the critic can focus his attention upon the work itself—its organization, inter-relationships, process of development, etc., or he may concern himself with the *way* in which the work was created, or he may deal with the cultural beliefs and attitudes which led the artist to employ a particular means in a particular way. Since completely random or indeterminate music is avowedly and purposefully without any organization, it is impossible to analyze or discuss its form or process. I cannot, therefore, deal with the structure and organization of this music—with the music itself. Nor will I be concerned with the random procedures themselves. For while such procedures have received considerable publicity, they are more interesting as symptoms of a new aesthetic than as techniques for creating works of art. In other words, random procedures are a means to an end and their real significance begins to appear when one asks *why*—for what purpose—they are employed. This distinction between means and

ends is also important because in music, as well as in other arts, the same ends have been achieved in different ways. In fact, as George Rochberg has pointed out, the aesthetic effect produced by random methods of composition are, paradoxically, the same as those realized by totally ordered music.⁴ Hence it is not surprising to find that sometimes the same composer writes both kinds.

It is easy, of course, to ridicule art created by accident—by asking “what does it represent?” or asserting that “my little child could have done that.” And perhaps the child could. But for these artists that is not the point at all. If we take what they are doing seriously—and, as I shall try to show, their position is a consistent and tenable one—then precisely because the art and aesthetic of the avant-garde represents a radical break with our common cultural convictions, we shall be forced to examine and make explicit those fundamental assumptions about the nature of man, the universe and man’s place in it, which are so much a part of our habitual modes of thought and perception that we unconsciously take them for granted.

II

What characterizes the music with which most of us are most familiar—the music of Bach or Haydn, Wagner or Bartok? Their compositions differ in many important ways: in melodic style, rhythmic organization, harmonic idiom, texture and instrumental timbre. But they are alike in one fundamental respect. In this music, tones are related to and imply one another. Think, for instance, of the “Liebestod” of Wagner’s *Tristan*, rising in cumulative sequences towards its powerful moment of climax; or of the kinetic intensity with which the slow introduction of Bartok’s *Sonata for Two Pianos and Percussion* surges toward the Allegro which follows; or of the way in which the rondo-finale of a Haydn symphony plays with our expectations that the main theme will return—failing to appear just when everything seems ready for its return or arriving just when it is least expected.

Because of its marked, though not necessarily obvious, structure and pattern, as well as because of our past experience with its grammar and syntax, such music is perceived as having a purposeful direction and goal. As we listen, we make predictions—albeit un-

⁴ “Indeterminacy in the New Music,” *Score*, Jan. 1961. p. 11 f.

conscious ones—as to where the music is going and how it will get there. Of course, our predictions may not be correct. What we expect may not occur or may do so at an unexpected time or in an unexpected way. But whether expected or not, what actually does take place is colored by the fact that predictions were made. That is, musical events are felt to be normal and regular, surprising, amusing, or even shocking, as they conform to, or deviate from, our predictions. Such goal oriented music I shall call *teleological*. (Similarly, the converging lines of perspective in a painting by Raphael or David, the swirling kinetic curves in a Delacroix or Van Gogh, the directional “arrows” in a Tintoretto or Picasso, all focus the viewer’s attention upon particular points of structural culmination—upon visual goals. And in literature the normal syntax of language, the delineation of human motivation, the explication of causal relationships among the sequential events of a narrative, and the presentation of dialectically structured thought processes—all combine to create a purposeful, goal-oriented art.)

But the music of the avant-garde directs us toward no points of culmination—establishes no goals toward which to move. It arouses no expectations, except presumably that it will stop. It is neither surprising nor, once you get used to its sounds, is it particularly startling. It is simply *there*. And this is the way it is supposed to be. Such directionless, unkinetic art, whether carefully contrived or created by chance, I shall call *anti-teleological* art. Here is what one young composer, Christian Wolfe, has to say about this music:

The music has a static character. It goes in no particular direction. There is no necessary concern with time as a measure of distance from a point in the past to a point in the future. It is not a question of getting anywhere, of making progress, or having come from anywhere in particular . . .⁵

What is involved here is not simply a new technique or method for realizing similar ends—as in the music of Haydn, Wagner, or Bartok where different means of creating goal-directed motion were employed. What is involved is a radically different set of ends, whether these ends be achieved by careful calculation as in the music of Stockhausen, the paintings of Tobey or Rothko, and the writings of Beckett and Alain Robbe-Grillet, or by random operations as in the music of Cage, the paintings of Mathieu, or

⁵ Quoted in Cage, *op.cit.*, p. 54.

the chance theatre of MacLow's *The Marrying Maiden*. And underlying this new aesthetic is a conception of man and the universe, which is almost the opposite of the view that has dominated Western thought since its beginnings.

In spirit, practice, and general aesthetic outlook anti-teleological art has much in common with that inspired by existentialism. Nevertheless, on the philosophical level at least, these positions can be distinguished. Because the differences between these facets of avant-garde art may be important in the future, I shall, where it seems useful, attempt to describe them. However, since both positions continue to change and evolve, the distinctions must be taken as only suggestive and provisional. The relationship of anti-teleological aesthetic to Oriental philosophy—and particularly to Zen Buddhism—is more direct and obvious. For many of these artists have read and been influenced by both Eastern and Western writings on Oriental philosophy. However, it is important to remember that “influence” is not a one-way reaction. The artists’ thinking and his creative attitudes must be *ready* to be influenced. It is said, for instance, that Debussy was “enthralled by the Javanese *gamelang* at the Exposition Universelle” of 1889.⁶ He was able to be “enthralled” because the art of music, and his attitude towards it, had developed to a point where such an experience was possible. Had Beethoven heard the same music a hundred years earlier, he would probably have walked away muttering: “Barbarians!” It is because Western art had already developed ways of perception, modes of organization, and philosophical attitudes approximating those of the Orient that the avant-garde could be influenced by them.

III

In his book, *Silence*, John Cage urges the composer to “give up the desire to control sound, clear his mind of music (in the ordinary sense), and set about discovering means to let sounds be themselves rather than vehicles for man-made theories or expressions of human sentiments.”⁷

Several important facets of the aesthetic of anti-teleological art are implicit in this quotation. In the first place, one is not listening

⁶ Edward Lockspeiser, *Debussy* (London: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1936), p. 240.

⁷ Cage, *op.cit.*, p. 10.

to the relationships among the sounds presented, but just to the sounds as sounds—as individual, discrete, objective sensations. A syntax or grammar, which would order these sounds and relate them to one another—creating goals, expectations, or a basis for prediction—is to be avoided at all costs. (And one way to make sure that you establish no syntactical-grammatical relationships is to employ the systematic use of chance as a technique of composition.)

Just as composers have sought, by chance or calculation, to destroy musical syntax by avoiding tonal relationships, repetitions, regular rhythmic patterns and the like, so painters have avoided symmetry, perspective, and the presence of recognizable objects or patterns because these tend to structure visual experience, creating goals and points of focus. Similarly in literature the elements of syntactical organization—plot, character and conventions of grammar—have been progressively weakened until almost only words remain.

Why must one avoid the structured syntax of pattern and form? Can't sounds be heard as sounds, or colors be seen as colors, and still be, so to speak, embedded in an order which relates the sounds or colors to each other? Perhaps. But it seems clear that the more one perceives the relationships among things, the less one tends to be aware of their existence as things in themselves—as pure sensation. You may, at some time, have had a radio or TV go haywire so that the sound was completely distorted. If so, you may recall that when the syntax and grammar became obscured and meaning was lost, you became very aware of sound *qua* sound—you became conscious of the bleeps, bloops and squeaks. Or, if a color slide is so out of focus that the objects depicted cannot be recognized, one becomes intensely aware of the experience of color as color.

It is to the naïve and primitive enjoyment of sensations and things for their own sakes that these artists seek to return. We must rediscover the reality and excitement of a sound as such, a color as such, and existence itself as such. But our habits of perception and apprehension—the accumulation of traditional preconceptions which we bring to aesthetic experience—prevent us from seeing and hearing what is really *there* to be perceived. The avant-garde novel aims, writes Bruce Morrissette, at

an art which creates a basically true and real image of man's situation among men and in the universe of neutral objects, without metaphysics, and scraped clean of the "crust" of obsolete ideas.⁸

Traditions, theories, systems are obstacles to be overcome by the artist as well as the writer. "As examples of such obstacles," the painter, Mark Rothko, cites "(among others) memory, history or geometry, which are swamps of generalization from which one might pull out parodies of ideas (which are ghosts) but never an idea in itself."⁹

The existentialists, too, seek to destroy our habitual modes of perception and thought. But for somewhat different reasons. The anti-teleological position holds that traditions, systems, and the like are evil because they limit our freedom of thought and action, deaden our sensitivity to sensation and feeling and, in the end, alienate man from nature of which he should be a part. Art should, in Cage's words, be

an affirmation of life—not an attempt to bring order out of chaos nor to suggest improvements in creation, but simply a way of waking up to the very life we're living, which is so excellent once one gets one's mind and one's desires out of its way and lets it act of its own accord.¹⁰

For the existentialists, on the other hand, man's alienation is part of the very nature of things. Nor is the revitalization of sensitivity of paramount importance. For them the accretion of traditional patterns of behavior and modes of thought must be stripped away not only because they limit human freedom, but because, as noted later, they limit the individual's responsibility for the choices he makes.

Particularly when contrasted with the more somber outlook of existentialism, the anti-teleological position with its emphasis upon the value of naïve, direct experience and upon the natural goodness of man, seems characteristically American. This, despite clear overtones of romanticism à la Rousseau. Cage's words, quoted above, remind us of Thoreau's:

If men would steadily observe the realities only, and not allow themselves to be deluded, life, to compare it with such things as we know, would be like a fairy tale and the Arabian Nights' Entertainments

⁸ "The New Novel in France," *Chicago Review*, Vol. XV, No. 3, p. 19.

⁹ Dorothy C. Miller (ed.), *15 Americans* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1952), p. 18.

¹⁰ *Op.cit.*, p. 12.

... (However) by closing the eyes and slumbering, and consenting to be deceived by shows, men establish and confirm their daily life of routine and habit everywhere, which is still built on purely illusory foundations.¹¹

On a somewhat less romantic level, the grammar and syntax of art—and their counterparts in the world of affairs: custom, law, and philosophy—are to be avoided because they continue to act as the vehicles for social and personal teleology. The anti-novel in which nothing happens because no event follows from any other, the directionless painting in which lines and colors lead to no points of culmination, and the anti-kinetic musical composition in which tones are without implications are perhaps at least in part a reaction to the mess that goals, purposes, and strivings have got us into.

The language of science, so full of words like force, tendency, and natural selection which imply purposes and goals, is, according to this viewpoint, misleading. Rightly understood these are purely descriptive terms. Nature has, in fact, no purpose or goal. It simply is. And like nature, art should simply present. Thus Rauschenberg contends that "painting is always strongest when . . . it appears as a fact or an inevitability, as opposed to a souvenir or arrangement."¹² Alain Robbe-Grillet makes a similar point when he says of Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* that "the theatrical character is on *stage*, this is his primary quality—he is there."¹³ Or, put negatively, the scenes in Robbe-Grillet's novel, *Jealousy*, are, Morrisette tells us, presented "without a word of analysis or commentary, in the pure domain of phenomenological semantics."¹⁴ Similarly Cage, as we have seen, emphasizes that sounds should simply "be themselves rather than vehicles for man-made theories or expressions of human sentiments."¹⁵

Our relationship to art, like our relationship to nature, ought to be one of acceptance. This is true for both the artist and the audience. The artist, whether employing chance methods of composition or applying a predetermined arbitrary formula, should accept the unanticipated result without seeking to impose his

¹¹ Henry David Thoreau, *Walden and other Writings* (New York: Modern Library, 1937), p. 86.

¹² Dorothy C. Miller (ed.), *Sixteen Americans* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1959), p. 58.

¹³ Quoted by Hugh Kenner in "Waiting for Godot to Begin," *WFMT Perspective*, Jan. 1962, p. 49.

¹⁴ *Op.cit.*, p. 18.

¹⁵ *Op.cit.*, p. 10.

personal will on the materials or making them conform to some syntactical preconception of what ought to take place. Similarly the audience should entertain no preconceptions, make no predictions as to what will occur, and force no organization upon the series of individual sounds, colors or words presented to it. A composer whose graphs are realized or whose notated fragments are ordered by a performer must accept what happens—and so should the audience, just as one accepts the sounds of a thunderstorm, a crying baby, a busy office, or silence.

Here another difference between the anti-teleological position and that of existentialism becomes apparent. In the anti-teleological view, existence is *one*. Being and non-being are not opposites, but merely different states which may happen to something. Death is a change in existence, not the negation of it. (Again one is struck by the kinship with a sort of pantheistic romanticism and thinks, perhaps, of Wordsworth's poem, "A slumber did my spirit seal.") Silence is just as real, just as much a part of existence as sound. As Rauschenberg has said: "A canvas is never empty."¹⁶ For the existentialists, however, being and non-being are categorical opposites. Death is a horrible stupidity, making life absurd, yet at the same time making the human responsibility for individual choice the crucial fact of existence and the basis for whatever human dignity there is.

IV

The denial of the reality of relationships and the relevance of purpose, the belief that only individual sensations and not the connections between them are real, and the assertion that predictions and goals depend not upon an order existing in nature, but upon the accumulated habits and preconceptions of man—all these rest upon a less explicit but even more fundamental denial: a denial of the reality of cause and effect. Once this is seen, the aesthetic of the avant-garde begins to make sense. For this is a position of uncompromising positivism¹⁷—or what I shall hereafter call *radical empiricism*.¹⁸

¹⁶ *Sixteen Americans*, *op.cit.*, p. 58.

¹⁷ After writing the first draft of this article, I discovered that George Rochberg had also used the word "positivism" to characterize the tendency towards indeterminacy in contemporary music (*Op.cit.* p. 11).

¹⁸ I have decided to call the particular facet of avant-garde art with which I shall be concerned "radical empiricism" rather than using the more usual designation of

It may, at first blush, seem ridiculous to deny the reality of cause and effect—the existence of necessary connections between events. However, we should remember the contentions of such philosophers as David Hume. And in the world of contemporary science—particularly in quantum mechanics where events are not fully determined or predictable, but only probable—the concept of cause and effect has again become problematical. After quoting from the second edition of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* to the effect that "all changes happen in accordance with the law of the connection of cause and effect," Henry Margenau states that "physics knows of no such law; as a matter of fact there is no plausible way of defining cause and effect."¹⁹

Actually this point requires some qualification. What is denied in quantum mechanics and in the aesthetic of radical empiricism is not the theoretical possibility of a principle of causation, but the theoretical possibility of isolating any particular event as being the cause of another particular event. This is the case because, since the world is seen as a single interrelated field or continuum in which everything interacts with—is the "cause" of—everything else, there are no separable causes and effects. Thus, discussing the emission of alpha-particles, Heisenberg writes that:

We know the forces in the atomic nucleus that are responsible for the emission of the α -particle. But this knowledge contains the uncertainty which is brought about by the interaction between the nucleus and the rest of the world. If we wanted to know why the α -particle was emitted at that particular time we would have to know the microscopic structure of the whole world including ourselves, and that is impossible.²⁰

"Abstract Expressionism" for several reasons: First, the term abstract expressionism has generally been used to apply to painting, but I shall be talking about a movement in all the arts; second, the term has been employed to designate several different tendencies in contemporary painting and consequently lacks precision; third, and more important, applied to the art and aesthetic with which I am concerned, the term is inaccurate and misleading. For the art we are discussing is not abstract in the sense of "being derived from" or a "distillation of." Quite the contrary. It is concrete in the extreme. Nor is it an "expression" of the artists' will or mind. Intention and communication are not involved. However, I did not want to use the term "positivism" because today, at least, that philosophical movement has been engaged in the construction of abstract, logical systems—a concern alien to many of the artists I am discussing.

¹⁹ "Meaning and Scientific Status of Causality," *Philosophy of Science* (New York: Meridian Books, Inc., 1960), p. 437.

²⁰ Werner Heisenberg, *Physics and Philosophy* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1962), p. 89-90.

This viewpoint, developed in connection with the *microscopic* world of electromagnetic phenomena and quantum mechanics, has been applied with varying degrees of precision by the radical empiricists to *macroscopic* events.²¹ Cage, for instance, writes that "there are an incalculable infinity of causes and effects . . . in fact each and every thing in all of time and space is related to each and every other thing in all of time and space."²² Doré Ashton seems to echo this point when he tells us that Mark Tobey's paintings symbolize "his Heraclitan conviction that all things come out of one and one out of all things."²³ In a similar vein Robbe-Grillet asserts that chronological time distorts our experience because it "forces events into a pattern of causality and imposes an unjustifiable logic upon them."²⁴

To deny causality is to deny the possibility of prediction. All notions of "if this occurs, then that must, or will probably, follow" disappear. Consequently (if I may be permitted so teleological a word), the music, art and literature of the avant-garde is characteristically unkinetic and unfocused. In a novel by Robbe-Grillet, a composition by Cage, or a painting by Guston one does not, and should not, feel that one event follows *from* (is the result of) what what went before. It simply "comes after." And since no event or action refers to or leads us to expect any other event or action, the sequence of events is, in any ordinary sense of the term, meaningless.

Again there is a difference in emphasis, if not in practice, between the existentialist wing of the avant-garde and the radical empiricist wing. For the radical empiricist, the isolated object freshly experienced is the chief source of value. The existentialist position, on the other hand, is apparently paradoxical: the meaning of the art work lies in its objectification of the meaninglessness

²¹ Paradoxically, the aesthetic of the avant-garde at one and the same time accepts and rejects contemporary science. On the one hand, it employs the concepts and terminology of modern physics—indeterminacy, field theory, and the relativity of space-time—with freedom, if not always with accuracy, to rationalize and support its position. On the other hand, it represents a revolt against the world which science has revealed—a world which is an abstract, man-made construct of unseen particles governed by unknown forces. And the radical empiricists, reacting against the artificiality of this unreal world (as well as its fruits), have sought to reaffirm the existence, the poignancy, and the value of directly experienced sensation.

²² *Op.cit.*, p. 47.

²³ "Mark Tobey," *Evergreen Review*, Vol. 4, No. 11, p. 31.

²⁴ Quoted in Richard Gilman, "Total Revolution in the Novel," *Horizon*, Vol. IV, No. 3, p. 99.

of life itself. "What Sartre calls the 'anti-novels' of Nathalie Sarraute," writes Norman Podhoretz, "seem . . . to represent a total submission to the meaninglessness of existence."²⁵

The denial of causality and the correlative denial of predictability have important consequences. In the first place, rational choice, which depends upon the possibility of envisaging the results of alternative courses of action, becomes a senseless fiction. (This being so, it makes no difference whether an art work is produced by the consistent use of chance, by a purely gratuitous act, or by the rigid application of a predetermined formula.) And attending to such a work of art, we, the audience, should not attempt to choose, even unconsciously, among alternative possibilities for continuation. We ought to remain detached: seeing, hearing, and observing the objective series of empirical events.

In their attitude toward choice the existentialists differ fundamentally from the radical empiricists. In the existentialist view, one performs a gratuitous act not because choice is meaningless, but because only by such an act can the individual become fully responsible for his actions. In all other actions, responsibility can, in part at least, be attributed to the social order, traditional modes of thought and behavior, habit, and the like. Seen in this light, existentialism seems closer to the tradition of western culture than does radical empiricism. For existentialism still seeks to solve the problems of the human condition—of man's despair in the face of death and his alienation from the world—within the basic framework of humanism, in which man is morally responsible for his own acts.

If predictability and choice are impossible, art cannot be a form of communication. For communication requires that the artist imagine or predict how others—the audience—will interpret and respond to the words, sounds, or visual designs he produces. As I write or speak, I choose my words by acting as my own audience; and I presume that you will respond to my words as I do. If I can't imagine what your responses will be—and the systematic use of chance, for instance, precludes this possibility—then there can be no communication. Furthermore, in literature and music at least, communication depends to a considerable extent upon the use of a traditionally established, shared syntax and grammar. When these

²⁵ "The New Nihilism and the Novel," *Partisan Review*, Vol. XXV, No. 4, p. 585.

are destroyed, communication is substantially weakened. The artists and composers of radical empiricism are well aware of this. The painter, Clyfford Still, for instance, asserts that: "Demands for communication are both presumptuous and irrelevant. The observer usually sees what his fears and hopes and learning teach him to see."²⁶

Furthermore, because aesthetic experience involves no predictions, no meanings, and no communication, the value of the work of art cannot be judged—any more than one can judge nature or natural objects in themselves. "Value judgments," writes Cage, "are not in the nature of this work as regards either composition, performance, or listening. The idea of relation being absent anything . . . may happen. A 'mistake' is beside the point, for once anything happens it authentically is."²⁷ Since error depends upon having a preconceived idea of what should occur, this is indeed an art without error. As the painter, Georges Mathieu, has said: ". . . if we reduce the part played by conscious control in favor of spontaneity, we find ourselves in the position where *the very notion of error* . . . disappears."²⁸

To deny the existence of causality is to deny the possibility of *form*. For implicit in relational concepts such as beginning, middle and end, antecedent-consequent, or periodicity, is the belief that the events in question are causally connected. An end, or conclusion, is something *caused* by what went before. However, in order to follow the form of a painting by Jackson Pollock, writes Allan Kaprow, "it is necessary to get rid of the usual idea of 'Form', i.e. a beginning, middle, and end, or any variant of this principle—such as fragmentation."²⁹ Or, as Robert Goldwater has said: "In Mark Rothko's pictures the apparent end lies close to the apparent beginning—so close in fact, or in apparent fact, that they are almost indistinguishable."³⁰ In a similar vein the composer, Stockhausen, has spoken of "creating in each piece an individual, self-contained world like a crystal, which, when one turns it, is always different, but always the same. It should not matter whether the music is played from the beginning, middle, or end, so long as

²⁶ *15 Americans*, *op.cit.*, p. 22.

²⁷ *Op.cit.*, p. 59.

²⁸ *From the Abstract to the Possible* (Paris: Editions du Cercle D'Art Contemporain, 1960), p. 21.

²⁹ "The Legacy of Jackson Pollock," *Art News*, Vol. 57, No. 6, p. 26.

³⁰ "Reflections on the Rothko Exhibition," *Arts*, Vol. 35, No. 6, p. 43.

it goes full circle.”³¹ In literature, too, syntactical form has disappeared. Because the human mind—and the world as seen through it—is considered to be an unorganized conglomeration of sensations, thoughts, memories, and affects whose relationships (if such exist) we can never really know, the words and phrases describing the mind’s activity have been divested of syntactical significance. The functional relationships among parts of speech tend to disappear. Similarly, sentences and paragraphs do not follow from one another. On the highest architectonic level—that of the succession of described events—expressed motivation and “all rhetorical analysis of psychology” are rejected.³² “Character and plot having disappeared from the novel,” writes Jean Bloch-Michel, “what is left. The object, replies Robbe-Grillet. And an object without meaning.”³³

Because it presents a succession rather than a progression of events, this art is essentially static. There are no points of culmination or of focus. All events are equally important and time, as we ordinarily conceive of it, dissolves. There is only duration. For ordered time depends upon the existence and recognition of the beginnings and terminations of separable events or patterns. Stockhausen’s image of music as a turning crystal which is always the same, yet always different, suggests Alfonso Ossario’s description of a painting by Jackson Pollock:

The picture surface, with no depth of recognizable space or sequence of known time, gives us the never-ending present. We are presented with a visualization of that remorseless consolation—in the end is the beginning.³⁴

And writing of Samuel Beckett’s novel, *Malone*, Robert Hatch says that we “cannot possibly tell whether we are with him (Malone) twenty minutes, two months, or ten years.”³⁵

These remarks suggest why radical empiricism probably finds its most idiosyncratic and convincing expression in the plastic arts. Since meaningful visual experience is, so to speak, directly and naturally presentational and objective, painting and sculpture can excite our interest and contemplation in the absence of explicit

³¹ Quoted in Francis Burt, “An Antithesis,” *Score*, March 1957, p. 69.

³² Morrisette, *op.cit.*, p. 19.

³³ “The Avant-Garde in French Fiction,” *Partisan Review*, Vol. XXV No. 3, p. 469.

³⁴ *15 Americans*, p. 15.

³⁵ “Laughter at Your Own Risk,” *Horizon*, Vol. III, No. 1, p. 113.

representation and an established vocabulary, grammar and syntax. We can, that is, respond sensitively to fortuitous coincidences of line, color, space and texture, delighting in the patterns and relationships which we discover, even as we do in looking at nature.

Even more important, the plastic arts are *de facto* static and timeless. Motions, goals, time and syntax are not explicitly stated, but must be inferred by the viewer. Hence the order in which events are perceived is never fully determined in painting or sculpture. Even a teleological work in which our attention is directed toward definite focal points, can be viewed in many different orders. Similarly it is possible to experience the structure of the visual world, whether ordered or disordered, without presuming that it communicates, has purposes, or even involves cause and effect.

In music and literature, on the other hand, a *de facto* chronology is *necessarily* established—even in a work whose order is the product of pure chance. And we tend, whether by nature or learning, to infer causal relationships from such a sequence of events. We attempt, that is, to relate earlier events to later ones, discovering implications and attributing a causal order to the series of stimuli. These tendencies are enforced by the fact that the sounds to which we attend most carefully are man-made, conventional events in which teleology and communication are almost invariably presumed. However, though both music and literature are by nature syntactical, temporal arts, they differ in that literature necessarily represents events in the external world of objects, actions, passions and the like, while music does not.

If this analysis is correct, is it not possible that the arts will move in the coming years *not* toward a common, monolithic aesthetic as they seem to be doing today, but toward a plurality of aesthetics, each appropriate to its particular art? The aesthetics of the visual arts might, for instance, continue to develop the tendencies implicit in radical empiricism, reflecting the culture's conceptualization of the natural order of the material universe. And, since language is man's means of relating himself to the external world and to other men, literature might continue to be primarily concerned with the relationships of men to each other and to the universe—with the social-moral order or, if you will, disorder. And music, operating in the realm of pure syntax without reference to external objects or events would, then, develop an order reflecting

and paralleling the structure and patterns of human mental processes.

V

Whatever one may think of the art of radical empiricism, the philosophical position of which it is the expression is, as I have tried to indicate, a consistent and tenable one. That this is the case was pointed out by Alfred North Whitehead:

Suppose that two occurrences may be in fact detached so that one of them is comprehensible without reference to the other. Then all notion of causation between them, or of conditioning, becomes unintelligible. There is—with this supposition—no reason why the possession of any quality by one of them should in any way influence the possession of that quality, or of any other quality, by the other. With such a doctrine the play and inter-play of qualitative succession in the world becomes a blank fact from which no conclusions can be drawn as to past, present, or future, beyond the range of direct observation. Such a positivistic belief is quite self-consistent, provided that we do not include in it any hopes for the future or regrets for the past. Science is then without any importance. Also effort is foolish, because it determines nothing.³⁶

New art has always been difficult to understand because it has always sought to replace old habits of thought and perception, old preconceptions and prejudices with new ways of looking at the world and fresh startling insights. But however drastically they may have modified the means of expression, the content, or the form of art, composers, artists and writers of the West have, until now, had the same essential ends—the same essential philosophical orientation—as their predecessors. There is a clear line of development from Aeschylus to Shakespeare to Joyce, from Phidias to Michelangelo to Picasso, and from Monteverdi to Beethoven to Stravinsky.

Radical empiricism is not, however, an attempt to redefine goals and values within the long tradition of western art and thought. Rather it seeks to break decisively with the most basic tenets of that tradition. "This new literature," says Robbe-Grillet, ". . . is going to represent—in its fulfillment—a revolution more total than those from which such movements as romanticism and naturalism were born."³⁷ And Cage, criticizing Edgar Varèse, the

³⁶ *Modes of Thought* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1938), p. 226.

³⁷ Quoted in Gilman, *op.cit.*, p. 96.

patron saint of experimental music, for injecting his personality—his teleology—into the music he writes, says that Varèse “is an artist of the past. Rather than dealing with sounds as sounds, he deals with them as Varèse.”³⁸

Man is no longer to be the measure of all things, the center of the universe. He has been measured and found to be an undistinguished bit of matter different in no essential way from bacteria, stones and trees. His goals and purposes; his egocentric notions of past, present and future; his faith in his power to predict and, through prediction, to control his destiny—all these are called into question, considered irrelevant, or deemed trivial. For these artists, writers and composers—and, however influential they may be, it must be remembered that they represent only a small segment of the world of contemporary art—for these radical empiricists, *the Renaissance is over*.

Here is Georges Mathieu's description of the present situation:

Our whole culture has allowed itself to be permeated, since the end of the Middle Ages, by Hellenistic thought patterns which aimed at bringing the cosmos down to human proportions and limited the means of access to an understanding of the Universe to those provided by reason and the senses. . . . For the past ten years, painting . . . has been freeing itself from the yoke of this burdensome inheritance. After twenty-five centuries of a culture we had made our own, we are witnessing in certain aspects of lyrical non-configuration a new phenomenon in painting—and, one might add, in the arts in general—which calls into question the very foundations of 40,000 years of aesthetic activity.³⁹

Whether the Renaissance is over for the rest of us—for our culture generally, only the future will tell. But whether it is over or not, the merit of considering the art and aesthetic of radical empiricism seriously is that it challenges us to discover and make explicit the grounds for beliefs and values which we unconsciously take for granted. If we are to defend our beliefs—our faith in a world of purpose and causality, time and prediction, choice and control, communication and morality, we must ask the most fundamental questions that can be asked: questions about the nature of man, his relationships to other men, and his place in the universe. Can we do more than simply assert our beliefs? Can we give empirically verifiable reasons for them?

³⁸ *Op.cit.*, p. 84.

³⁹ *Op.cit.*, p. 9.

A. R. AMMONS

Motion for Motion

Watched on the sandy, stony bottom of the stream
the oval, black shadow of the waterbeetle, shadow
larger than beetle, though no blacker, mirroring
at a down and off angle motion for motion, whirl, run:

(If you knew the diameters
of oval and beetle, the
depth of the stream, several
indices of refraction
and so forth

you might say why
the shadow outsizes the
beetle—

I admit to mystery
in the obvious—

but now that I remember some
I think the shadow
included the bent water where
the beetle rode, surface

tension, not breaking, bending
under to hold him up.

the deformation recorded in shade:
for light, arising from so far away,

is parallel
through a foot of water
(though edge-light
would

make a difference—a beetle can
exist among such differences
and do well):

someone has a clear vision of it all,
exact to complete existence;
loves me when I swear and praise
and smiles, probably, to see me
wrestle with sight

and gain no reason from it, or money,
but a blurred mind overexposed):

caught the sudden gust of a catbird, selfshot
under the bridge and out into my sight: he splashed
into the air near a briarvine, lit:

I don't know by what will: it was clear sailing
on down the stream
and prettier—a moss-bright island made two streams
and then made one and, farther, two fine birches
and a lot of things to see: but he stopped

back to me,
didn't see me, hopped on through the vines, by some
will not including me . . .

and then there were two beetles, and later three at
once swimming in the sun, and three shadows,
all reproduced, multiplied without effort
or sound, the unique beetle—and I—lost to an

automatic machinery in things, duplicating, without
useful difference, some changeless order extending
backward beyond the origin of earth,

changeless and true, even before the water fell, or
the sun broke, or the beetle turned, or the still
human head bent from a bridge-rail above to have a look.

Nelly Myers

I think of her
 while having a bowl of wheatflakes
(why? we never had wheatflakes
or any cereal then
except breakfast grits)
 and tears come to my eyes
and I think that I will die
because

the bright, clear days when she was with me
and when we were together
(without caring that we were together)

can never be restored:
 my love wide-ranging,
 I mused with clucking hens
 and brought in from summer storms
 at midnight the thrilled cold chicks
 and dried them out
 at the fireplace
 and got up before morning
 unbundled them from the piles of rags and
 turned them into the sun:

I cannot go back
I cannot be with her again

and my love included the bronze
sheaves of broomstraw
she would be coming across the fields with
before the household was more than stirring out to pee

and there she would be coming
as mysteriously from a new world
and she was already old when I was born but I love
the thought of her hand
wringing the tall tuft of dried grass

and I cannot see her beat out the fuzzy bloom
again
readying the straw for our brooms at home,
I can never see again the calm sentence of her mind
as she
measured out brooms for the neighbors and charged
a nickel a broom:

I think of her

but cannot remember how I thought of her
as I grew up: she was not a member of the family:
I knew she was not my mother,
not an aunt, there was nothing
visiting about her: she had her room,
she kept her bag of money
(on lonely Saturday afternoons
you could sometimes hear the coins
spilling and spilling into her apron):
she never went away, she was Nelly Myers, we
called her Nel,
small, thin, her legs wrapped from knees to ankles
in homespun bandages: she always had the soreleg
and sometimes
red would show at the knee, or the ankle would swell
and look hot
(and sometimes the cloths would
dwindle,
the bandages grow thin, the bowed legs look
pale and dry—I would feel good then,
maybe for weeks
there would seem reason of promise,
though she rarely mentioned her legs
and was rarely asked about them): she always went,
legs red or white, went, went
through the mornings before sunrise
covering the fields and
woods
looking for huckleberries

or quieting some wild call to move and go
 roaming the woods and acres of daybreak
and there was always a fire in the stove
when my mother rose (which was not late):

 my grandmother, they say, took her in
when she was a stripling run away from home
(her mind was not perfect
 which is no bar to this love song
 for her smile was sweet,
 her outrage honest and violent)
and they say that after she worked all day her relatives
would throw a handful of dried peas into her lap
 for her supper
and she came to live in the house I was born in the
northwest room of:

Oh I will not end my grief
 that she is gone, I will not end my singing,
my songs like blueberries
felt-out and black to her searching fingers before light
welcome her
wherever her thoughts ride with mine, now or in any time
 that may come
when I am gone, I will not end visions of her naked feet
in the sandpaths, I will hear her words
 “Applecandy” which meant Christmas
“Lambesdamn” which meant Goddamn (she was forthright
 and didn’t go to church
 and nobody wondered if she should

and I agree with her the Holcomb pinegrove bordering our
field was
more hushed and lovelier than cathedrals
 not to mention country churches with unpainted boards
and so much innocence as she carried in her face
has entered few churches in one person)

and her exclamation “Founshy-day!” I know no meaning for
but knew she was using it right:

and I will not forget how though nearly deaf
 she heard the tender blood in lips of children
 and knew the hurt

and knew what to do:

and I will not forget how I saw her last, tied in a chair
 lest she rise to go
 and fall

for how innocently indomitable

was her lust

and how her legs were turgid with still blood as she sat
 and how real her tears were as I left

to go back to college (damn all colleges):

Oh where her partial soul, as others thought,
 roams roams my love,
 mother, not my mother, grandmother, not my grandmother,
 slave to our farm's work, no slave I would not stoop to:
 I will not end my grief, earth will not end my grief,
 I move on, we move on, some scraps of us together,
 my broken soul leaning toward her to be touched,
 listening to be healed.

Open

Exuberance: joy to the last
 pained loss
 and hunger of air:
 life, open, not decided on,
 though decided in death:

the mind cannot be
 rid
 while it works
 of remembered genitals
 beautiful, dank, pliant,

of canyons, brush hills, pastures, streets,
unities and divisions,
meetings,

exact remembrance of liquid buttocks,
navel, ellipse of hand,

magnified territories of going down
and rising,
the thin tracing saliva line,

joy's configurations:

serendipity: the unexpected,
the
possible, the unembodied,
uneventd:

the sun will burst: death
is certain: the future limited
nevertheless is
limitless: the white knotted

groin,
the finger describing
entrances!

the dark, warm with glowing awareness, the
hot dis-
missals of desire
until the last last tear of pain:

until the end nothing ends, lust
forward, rushing;
pillars of ice wet-bright in melt,
warm

with always-yielding joy: yes
yes
yes, the loose mouths hiss in the mornings of death.

Raft

I called the wind and it
went over with me
 to the bluff
 that keeps the sea-bay
and we stayed around for a while
trying to think
 what to do:

I took some time to watch
the tall reeds
and bend their tassels
 over to my touch
 and
as the lowering bay-tide left
 salt-grass
combed flat towards the land
tried to remember
what I came to do:

in the seizures,
I could not think but
 vanished into the beauty
 of any thing I saw
and loved,
pod-stem, cone branch, rocking
 bay grass:

it was almost dark when the wind
breathless from playing
with water
 came over and stopped
resting in the bare trees and dry grass
 and weeds:

I built a fire in a hollow stump
and sitting by

wove a disc of reeds,
a round raft, and

sometime during the night
the moon shone but
it must have been the early night
for when I set out
standing on my disc
and poling with a birch
it was black dark
of a full tide:
the wind slept through my leaving:
I did not wake it to say goodbye:

the raft swirled before day
and the choppy, tugging bay
let me know
I had caught the tide
and was rushing through

the outer sea-banks
into the open sea:

when dawn came
I looked
and saw no land:

tide free and
without direction I
gave up the pole,
my round raft
having no bow,
nowhere to point:

I knelt in the center
to look for where the
sun would break
and when it started to come
I knew the slow whirl

of my ship
which turned my back to the east
and
brought me slowly round again:

at each revolution
I had
new glory in my eyes
and thought with chuckles
where would I be at noon
and what of the night
when the black ocean
might not seem there

though of course stars
and planets rise and
east can be known
on a fair night
but I was not
certain
I wanted to go east:
it seemed wise
to let
the currents be
whatever they would be,
allowing possibility
to chance
where choice
could not impose itself:

I sat turning that way
a long time,
glad I had brought my great
round hat
for the sun got hot:

at noon
I could not tell
I turned

for overhead the sun,
 motionless in its dome,
spun still
and did not wobble
the dome
or turn a falling shadow
 on my raft's periphery:

soon though that symmetry
eased
 and the sun
was falling
and the wind came
 in an afternoon way

rushing before dark to catch me.

A Nature Walk

I went for a walk over the dunes again this morning
to the sea,
then turned right along
 the surf

 rounded a naked headland
 and returned

along the inlet shore:

it was muggy sunny, the wind from the sea steady and high,
crisp in the running sand,
 some breakthroughs of sun
 but after a bit

continuous overcast:

the walk liberating, I was released from forms,
from the perpendiculars,
 straight lines, blocks, boxes, binds
of thought
into the hues, shadings, rises, flowing bends and blends
 of sight:

 I allow myself eddies of meaning:
yield to a direction of significance
running
like a stream through the geography of my work:
 you can find
in my sayings
 swerves of action
 like the inlet's cutting edge:
 there are dunes of motion,
organizations of grass, white sandy paths of remembrance
in the overall wandering of mirroring mind:

but Overall is beyond me: is the sum of these events
I cannot draw, the ledger I cannot keep, the accounting
beyond the account:

in nature there are few sharp lines: there are areas of
primrose
 more or less dispersed;
disorderly orders of bayberry; between the rows
of dunes,
irregular swamps of reeds,
though not reeds alone, but grass, bayberry, yarrow, all . . .
predominantly reeds:

I have reached no conclusions, have erected no boundaries,
shutting out and shutting in, separating inside
 from outside: I have
 drawn no lines:
 as

manifold events of sand

change the dune's shape that will not be the same shape
tomorrow,

so I am willing to go along, to accept
the becoming
thought, to stake off no beginnings or ends, establish
no walls:

by transitions the land falls from grassy dunes to creek
to undercreek: but there are no lines, though
change in that transition is clear
as any sharpness: but "sharpness" spread out,
allowed to occur over a wider range
than mental lines can keep:

the moon was full last night: today, low tide was low:
black shoals of mussels exposed to the risk
of air
and, earlier, of sun,
waved in and out with the waterline, waterline inexact,
caught always in the event of change:
a young mottled gull stood free on the shoals
and ate

to vomiting: another gull, squawking possession, cracked a crab,
picked out the entrails, swallowed the soft-shelled legs, a least
sandpiper running in to snatch leftover bits:

risk is full: every living thing in
siege: the demand is life, to keep life: the small
white blacklegged egret, how beautiful, quietly stalks and spears
the shallows, darts to shore
to stab—what? I couldn't
see against the black mudflats—a frightened
fiddler crab?

the news to my left over the dunes and
reeds and bayberry clumps was
fall: thousands of tree swallows
gathering for flight:

an order held
in constant change: a congregation
rich with entropy: nevertheless, separable, noticeable
as one event,
not chaos: preparations for
flight from winter,
cheet, cheet, cheet, cheet, wings rifling the green clumps,
beaks
at the bayberries:
a perception full of wind, flight, curve,
sound:
the possibility of rule as the sum of rulelessness:
the "field" of action
with moving, incalculable center:

in the smaller view, order tight with shape:
blue tiny flowers on a leafless weed: carapace of crab:
snail shell:
pulsations of order
in the bellies of minnows: orders swallowed,
broken down, transferred through membranes
to strengthen larger orders: but in the large view, no
lines or changeless shapes: the working in and out, together
and against, of millions of events: this,
so that I make
no form of
formlessness:

orders as summaries, as outcomes of actions over-ride
or in some way result, not predictably (seeing me gain
the top of a dune,
the swallows
could take flight—some other fields of bayberry
could enter fall
berryless) and there is serenity:

no arranged terror: no forcing of image, plan,
or thought:
no propaganda, no humbling of reality to precept:

terror pervades but is not arranged, all possibilities
 of escape open: no route shut, except in
 the sudden loss of all routes:

 I see narrow orders, limited tightness, but will
 not run to that easy victory:
 still around the looser, wider forces work:
 I will try
 to fasten into order enlarging grasps of disorder, widening
 scope, but enjoying the freedom that
 Scope eludes my grasp, that there is no finality of vision,
 that I have perceived nothing completely,
 that tomorrow a new walk is a new walk.

Unsaid

Have you listened for the things I have left out?
 I am nowhere near the end yet and already
 hear
 the hum of omissions,
 the chant of vacancies, din of

silences:

there is the other side of matter, antimatter,
 the antiproton:
 we
 have measured the proton: it has mass: we
 have measured the antiproton: it has negative mass:

you will not

hear me completely even at this early point
 unless you hear my emptiness:
 go back:

how can I
tell you what I have not said: you must look for it

yourself: that

side has weight, too, though words cannot bear it
out: listen for the things I have left out:

I am
aware
of them, as you must be, or you will miss

the non-song

in my singing: it is not that words *cannot* say
what is missing: it is only that what is missing
cannot
be missed if
spoken: read the parables of my unmaking:

feel the ris-

ing bubble's trembling walls: rush into the domes
these wordy arches shape: hear

me
when I am
silent: gather the boundaried vacancies:

JOANNE GREENBERG

Summering

THERE WAS A FARM owned by the friend of a very distant relative, and I was sent there for a summer with many admonitions to eat fresh butter and sleep early and breathe deeply. When I had unpacked and gotten settled, I went out the back way, closing the door quietly, shyly, in my strangeness, to pursue the dutiful and mournful occupation of pulling air into my lungs and pushing it out again. From the back door there was a path leading to the dairy shed and a small stream and some other out-buildings of the farm, and behind them the great rising heap of a mountain. At first sight and ever after, the greatness of it was like some religious song of many voices—like the beginning of a Mass, and so I called it in my mind, *Kyrie Mountain*. It lifted in the *Kyrie's* three folds: pine-groves and rising meadows and its final *Kyrie Eleison* ended in a bare crag of rock, like an altar. I stood for a long time listening to it, never having experienced the sound of something seen, and I faltered even in trying to explain it to myself. All the voices and each voice moved to the great climax in a counterpoint of little rising hills.

A girl came out carrying a pail and walking close by me to the dairy house. She kept her eyes straight ahead, except for a quick flip of the glance over me and no change on her face at all. Behind her a woman came out on the small back porch, calling:

"Justine, don't you just get them eggs, and don't hurry one bit! I got no cake just waitin' for them eggs!"

I smiled at her elliptical speech, and I could also hear Justine in the dairy-shed, muttering in her own thread of the theme: "Damn woman—lay your own eggs, or what's the cackle for!"

After a while Justine returned from the dark doorway holding her eggs and retracing her steps on the straight-worn path from its door to the back steps of the house. Her muttering, like the engine of her movement, kept its steady undertone, and I realized as she mounted the steps and went inside, that she had not stopped to look about, not even giving an obeisance to the great lift of mountain, or a glance to the white clouds above us, or even one at

me. She walked as if she were wearing blinders: the packed earth path, the steps, and up, and in, and gone. She left only the bang of the screen-door behind her and then silence. After a while I followed, thinking to go to my room, for the view had made me dizzy with its grandeur and the girl confounded me with her blindness in the face of it. I went up the steps, closing the screen-door quietly because of the mountain that was standing there behind me. The dark hall led past the kitchen and I heard two women's voices and the creak, going and coming, of a rocker. The farmer's wife and the older hired woman were resting before the dinner was begun.

"Summerin' " one said, and the long creak.

"You seen her?"

"No, I ain't." (creak)

"Skinny lookin'. Rat-tails of braids—She's loony, you know." (creak)

"She done anything loony?"

(Cre—eak—and a laugh) "She don't have to; why, Cina, country girls go to the city to get jobs, but city folks send strong girls to summer away only when they got TB or are loony." (Creak—)
"That water boiled yet?"

"I'll get it."

I was transported with delight, and the longer I studied over their words the happier I felt. They thought me powerful enough—grown-up enough to be mad! I glowed with the tribute. Then, in a great leap of joy and awe, as great as that which had come with first sight of the mountain, I beheld my freedom in this madness. It stretched as wide before me as the summer itself, and seeing it, opened out from the first day, it seemed to be far more than the mere delight of saying and doing what I wished. I had always been afraid of people and powerless before change. Now I was not to be hindered—there was no need to see both sides of an issue, to stand before circumstances like a muddled old scholar toiling over a pun in a dead language. Madwomen took all the binding little bits of daily duties and trifles and tore them up and pulled free. Laughing, I jerked the twisted, snagged rubber-bands from my braids and undid the hair. It was straight and dry—full of electricity so that it lifted away around my head. It was wonderful hair for madness. For a while I lept about and posed and

gestured, but soon I remembered that if I feigned a kind of madness that was not truly mine, I would be doing no more than changing one of my disguises for another. I did a few more crouches, artistically, into corners and then recombined and re-braided my hair and went outside again to listen to my mountain.

In those first weeks I was bitterly, ridiculously possessive of the whole great hill. Every inch of land over which I passed I claimed as mine; walking west into the birch-groves I was jealous for the east, at dawn for sunset, at sunset for midnight. The orgy of this first love was as pure a greed as any ancient despot could have known, and I sacrificed even my wish to be disentangled from the whole human race to besiege the stolid Justine with questions about the mountain's winters. Had she ever seen the northern lights there—or noticed the winter sunrise or the autumn stars? What she had seen was little, and of that she could describe even less. The stars were pretty or the snow was deep and no more. When I tried to ask more she would shrug and mention some duty and hurry off in bewilderment. Justine was a summer hired girl who lived in the town nearby. I later learned that she had once beaten a savage wolf to death with a shovel and that she was quick and utterly fearless in the face of danger, yet before the simplest of my questions concerning the look of a birch-grove she was reduced to the numbness of a frightened child.

And I showed Kyrie Mountain off even as I was jealous of any one else's knowledge of it. To Mrs. Van Riper, the busy wife of the farm, I bragged about the berry-groves that I alone had discovered high above the pine-slopes, even above the great rock-thrust. That altar had seemed from below to crown the mountain, but it was only hiding the summit for those who loved it enough to seek it. Mrs. Van Riper always nodded and said something pleasant, which angered me so that I went out the back door, muttering along the *via dolorosa* to the dairy shed. "Isn't that nice! When Moses came off the mountain with God written down and notarized in his hands, everyone looked and smiled and said: 'Isn't that nice!' No wonder he was bitter!"

I paused at the threshold of the dairy shed with its damp darkness before me, and it occurred to me then that it was not proper, perhaps, to be so angered at her for her lack of feeling for nature while I was moving toward the quiet, cool, dim corner where she

kept the treasure of the new butter. A curl of it scraped discretely from the tub tasted like the flowers on my Kyrie Mountain.

II

On the first fold of the slope there was an abandoned farm. It lay eastward and could not be seen from below, but once the front of the three risings had been climbed, old paths began their subtle work, leading a walker, almost even against his will, to the deserted place of forgotten failure. The house was only a heap of fallen boards and the weed-grown holes of root-cellar and storage pit. The barn was still standing, and though it leaned heavily in the way of the wind, it yet evoked an old life of cattle and ploughs and tilled soil. I had said in the city to my amazed parents that I did not care about the human race, and that I wanted peace from it and its demands, but I found myself going out of my way to visit the deserted place and question its ghosts—how they came and how they left.

Now it was full summer; the days were getting very hot and before noon the heat would water up from the earth, and the sky and the hills would blaze yellow. As I climbed the hill one morning later than usual, I grew dizzy with the heat and exertion and my heart began to pound. Although there were many trees to the side and a big maple near the ruins of the house, the height of the sun had driven the shade from them, so as soon as I came to the place, I went trembling and unsteady to the barn and through the gaping door into the dimness. Outside the crickets sang with their hot, crackling noise as if the world were frying in its own heat.

I closed my eyes and let the trembling dizziness pass and then I rested, smelling the agedness of the place—rats, cobwebs and a shadow of sweet-smelling grass that had been stored here once long ago. When I was no longer weak I got up and went out into the oven of the noon. I stirred about in the wreck of the house for a little, finding the blue bits of old glass which the sun had darkened. Above the house and to the right there was a little patch marked off with stones that had been her kitchen and herb garden. Weeds had taken it over and some of the herbs had gone wild and were too strange for me to name, but there were some that were still to be identified, and I walked here and there, building on to the unknown lives the facts of a table and a cool pantry and a medicine

shelf. There was mint and camomile and fennel and wild onions, dill-weed and flax. The sun was making me dizzy again and so I went down to the path and past the house to the barn, feeling almost a sense of ownership of all of it, having gone so boldly into the intimacies of cupboards and drawers. I was at the barn door, one hand on the doorpost and one foot rising for a step when I saw *him* coming out, a hard, burned-leather face with two pale and wild eyes and a tangle of hair.

We had come from nowhere, both of us it seemed, to stand so close so suddenly. His clothes were ragged and brown—face and hair and clothes seemed all of one color, but the body beneath the tatters was as lithe and agile as an animal's. I came to myself, terrified, and turned and tore away down the hill toward the Van Riper farm, hearing him follow in the long grass behind me, and praying I would reach the bottom first—would not stumble and fall. I was too busy watching my footing to notice that I was running toward the place where the great islands of shackleweed grew. As I came upon it I knew that I could never get past. The long vines wrapped around the feet with their thick mat until movement was slowed and then stopped. He would come upon me, struggling and defeated. I could not bear the thought of my own stupidity and humiliation. I could see myself frantically trying to free my feet, and I could hear his little laughter. I stopped short of the green tangle and straightened myself and turned to confront him. The hill above me was bare and utterly still. All the way up to the farm the long grass weltered in the heat, but there was no one there. For the first time since I had seen the mountain and named it for its three surging rises, and heard in it a great choral prayer, I was frightened of it and eager to be back at the Van Riper's farm. It was an unsteady walk down the last way, feeling watched and knowing that I was not; feeling betrayed and knowing that I had been foolish. I went into the house by the formal front door and to my room without being noticed, and for the first time, without turning and the greeting of a small wink or a head-tilt toward the beloved hill.

At supper I wondered if I still looked pale, but if so it was not noted. Mr. Van Riper was discussing his trip to town and I, needing to feel more natural at the family table, was helping to take the plates to the sideboard. Summertime was heavy with work and so

there was usually no lingering over coffee, but this evening a particular story kept Mr. Van Riper at his place, his expression more alive with the telling than I had yet seen it, and I noticed all of us as we sat, and how the light was falling and how the little spill of sugar by the bowl was familiar—sugar always spills a little, but those few grains on the bare table took a great meaning to me somehow, and I was grateful and very much moved that there was a here to run to when mountains bred their apparitions. I had spoken so often of the want of freedom, of the stupid and stultifying bonds that held a person to his groups and clans and kinships that I had forgotten how cold the world was, and how dark outside the rooms of lighted windows in one of which I sat now, so humble and glad that someone knew me and would be moved to search if I were missing.

The next day I spent about the farm and in the afternoon wandered into the kitchen to help Cina and Justine who were laying out the canning things. It seemed almost easy to mention coming upon the mad-looking stranger as I stood in that ordinary place in the middle of a common task, but Cina responded with a wild whoop of laughter, putting down her towel and throwing back her head, and she laughed in a long, refreshing gust of sound. I would have been angry or ashamed except that listening to her enjoyment was a joy in itself. When she had slowed down a little, she flapped the bewildered Justine on the head with her towel, crying: "Don't you see—don't you see what it must have been?" Her eyes were wet with laughing. "Oh, my soul!" and she sputtered and laughed again, fighting to tell us. "Lord O'Glory! I ain't seen old Word in a couple of years, and except if you know him he must look like you said, all wild and dirt-color. That man you seen is no one to fear. He used to work on that old farm when he was a boy. Went to the war and when he come back the folks had gone away somewhere. He just took to roaming the hills all these years, but he stays around here and ever so often he goes to that place where he once was when he was a boy. He ain't got harm in a bit of his heart. Now what's funny . . ." and again she went off into a ripple of giggles, and I laughed too, with relief and thankfulness. "What's funny, is that he come runnin' down here yesterday, from the western side he come, and run in here just a-crying scart and

says: 'I was a-coming out of the barn when I seen a ghost at the barn door—a big witch—tall as a man and skinny, and it was as pale as the buried dead!' I took me near an hour to quiet him, and I just lay it to loneliness because I didn't think of you being there at all." We all laughed together and remembered the expressions we must have had and laughed again, and my paleness from the heat and laughed again, and how we both must have run by different ways past the wind but not our fear, and laughed again, a ghost and a witch, and laughed again; but toward the end of it, it came to me that we were too much alike, old Word and me, not to have been afraid—that we had only been looking in mirrors.

That evening I sat by the dairy shed and watched my mountain and listened to its night-chant of rising and falling tones, up, into the darkness. I knew that I would meet old Word soon, but that we would never laugh at how we had come on one another. I said to Kyrie: "Oh, my love—even if I owned you, you would never be owned." It was a bitter knowledge so soon in loving. How long ago had Word learned that the only way to love such a mountain was to witness and endure its time and no more?

A few days later, Cina took me aside, smiling, and said: "I let on at the store for him to come. He's in the kitchen, that old Word, and now you go in there and show him that you ain't no witch, but real."

I went in slowly and saw him and was overwhelmed with my own powers of *fantasy and fear*. He was short now, almost small, and though his body was agile and lithe it was slender. In the hard light of the kitchen he was much older than I had imagined. When he turned and saw me his eyes widened with terror and made the hurried equation of his place and mine and the door. Then he looked at me again against the ordinariness of the stove and the wall with its matchbox holder, and we just stood so for a long, long time.

At last I said: "I'm summering here. How do you do?" and held out my hand.

The sound came very small and quavering, but the effect, though I had not planned it, was right. I saw him relax, and when he looked up again at me the hardness of his look was that of a recluse to a strange young girl and not mortal to ghost.

"Good afternoon, ma'am" he said, disdaining my outstretched hand—a travesty in a woman, that male gesture. The shamed hand retreated to me.

For a while we spoke of our mountain and I exclaimed when he told me that the pine-grove had once burned down and was starting again a little southward of its old fathering stand. I mentioned the bee-tree I had found.

"I never go there no more" he said. "Snake bit me there once and I always shied clear after that." We gave and took the little scraps of fact and recognition, but here in the kitchen whose whole purpose was standing against Word's nature and my dream, the talk was clumsy and our strangeness increased instead of diminishing. Yet I was glad and honored when the old man, turning to leave, said: "You seen the stream, where it begins, up over by the high rock?"

I had seen it, of course, but something kept me from telling him so. He said: "Well, I'll show you if you want, and the old mining trail to Woman Mountain too." All his treasures. I knew that he would give me every beauty, every view, every glade. It was a greater generosity that I would ever know myself, and he had humbled me with his modesty in it.

"Good afternoon, Ma'am" he said. I watched him go down the road and walk toward town, knowing that once out of sight he would cut off the road and begin to climb. His delicacy was such in this thing he so understood, that he would never let me see him climbing the mountain, sure and knowing and steady. Such a thing spoke intolerably of ownership: his deftness was a gesture of courtly grace from the old lover to the new.

III

If my first month of the mountain was like a meeting, a love and courtship, the second was like the early time in a marriage. I began to take trips to the town, I saw people, ran errands and looked into other mysteries, holding to myself the sureness that Kyrie Mountain was always there for me when I wished it, and that it was a secret source of power and love in me. I saw Word now and then, and he showed me many places and told me many many tales of the years before, but now the very joy of our mountain gave me a new surge into the world of people. It began with Justine.

On that first day, when I had seen her so stolid and unaware of her surroundings, and later all closed and mute against my questioning, it seemed to me that perhaps she was dull and stupid and not able to be roused by anything. Then, one evening when supper was almost over, I heard the sound of girls singing. The sound was clearer and brighter coming down the road toward the farm and, from the kitchen, a starched and pressed and beribboned Justine flew, red in the cheeks and glowing with delight to answer it. Gone was the flat-footed walk as if it had never been. "Who are those girls?" I asked Mrs. Van Riper, and Justine answered: "It's the girls from the laundry! It's their night, and a day off tomorrow, and we're all going to the picture-show in Nillis Gorbals truck!"

I went out on the porch to look at them, and would have gone down just to see them off had I not caught a glimpse of Justine's face as she passed me. She did not want me there. I repaid Word then, by paying Justine; I went inside and contented myself with looking through the crocheted curtain at them. There were eight of them, about my age, and they looked so happy and friendly in their starched skirts and tumbling hair, laughing and practicing steps in the road that I repented me of having wished mankind to end forever as recently as a month ago. I went into my little room quietly and read one of my books, knowing even with the little sting of envy that there would not be a single one of the gay girls who would know the name of the famous author or of the great work.

Near midnight I got tired and went out to stretch in the open night. The full moon was as close as I had ever seen it. On the arm of Kyrie mountain the aspen grove was silver, so silver that I almost thought the wind would carry the sound of its passing there as a tinkling or the ping of little bells. The road was silver and my shadow was black on silver and I began to walk down the road to the highway, turning around again and again to see the great mass of mountain pulling away into the background all its ridges and peaks. Now Woman Mountain to the north seemed to be ascendant, and I saw, or rather heard and saw how ringing my chorale would have to be to encompass all of the great range of hills.

I was lifting my arms to greet it in its magnificence when I sensed someone close to me, sitting off the road in the tall grass or

against a tree perhaps, and watching. It was not fear at first, but anger that made me call out: "Who is it!" hating whomever it was who always seemed to be standing between me and my rare glimpses of privacy and singleness in the world. A voice answered from one of the trees to the left of the road: "It's just me, Mary Emerald."

The voice was good and firm but not eager, and she hesitated before dropping down from one of the low branches where she had been sitting.

"I'm Mary Emerald Wrather." It sounded like Merry Emerald Rather—confusing words to puzzle out in the moonlight which had wrought so many changes of its own upon the world. She sat down under the tree and I saw her frilly blouse and patterned skirt—a well-made solidness of body, a plain face, even in this moonlight, and I said: "Were you one of the girls with Justine tonight?"

"Justine and them went on over to one of their houses. I guess they'll be going on 'till morning."

I came closer, wondering if she had chosen this instead of the lights and noise and gaiety of the "night out." I was cautious and wanted to be sure.

"Why didn't you go with them?"

"I don't know," she said evenly.

I groaned to myself. Another Justine.

Mary Emerald looked up at me for a while and said: "You're the one staying up to Van Rippers', supposed to be crazy, ain't you?" I said I was. "I had a aunt once like that, but she was locked up. I went to see her once. It was awful there."

"Why?" I asked.

"No trees. Lots of people, stone, walls and walkways, people laughin' and screamin'. No trees." She shuddered. "I never want to be where there's no trees." Her voice was stolid and betrayed no emotion at the words she said, but the feeling that the dry words conveyed was somehow even deeper than if they had been said with some sort of flourish, such as I would have used. Suddenly she laughed shortly. "It's all over town about you and Word met up to the barn. Cina's been come to tell it like *amen* in to church."

"I hope nobody's been at Word about it" I said, knowing that they must have been making fun of him and wanting to cry a little that he had said nothing of it to me or let it change the clumsy

deference of man to woman no matter that we were a ragged man and a "crazy" half-woman. We were both quiet for a time, looking at the glowing space between the road and the mountain, an air that was visible in moonlight. Finally Mary Emerald said: "You ever been to the lake? That's the best place to go on a night like this."

It was surprisingly close—across the highway and down a small hill—and it was covered on one side by the shadows of tall trees, so that the half of it that was not glinting silver was as black as ink. Without having to decide, we shed our clothes as if all they represented of duty and constraint had never truly belonged to us, and we sprang into the water.

Even there we were quiet. We did not joke or laugh or splash, but we made trails with our bodies in the water to see how the moon would stumble on the roughened paths. We dove down, silently, sounding, and then came up under the top sheet of the water, to see how far the light reached down; we floated on our backs and looked at the stars, enjoying that the water habituated itself to our every movement, fitting us to the last contour of our bodies. Suddenly, Mary Emerald turned her head quickly toward me, putting her hand up so that I swam to her, making no sound.

"I heard a truck stop!" she whispered. We waited for a time and I was almost ready to say: "See, it was nothing" when I heard a titter of laughter and a guffaw and a girl saying: "He does too!" and more laughter.

"It's them!" Mary Emerald hissed, "It's Justine and them and that old Nillis Gorbali!"

We hurried out as quietly as we could. Suddenly we were very vulnerable and alone, standing on the edge, and Mary Emerald cried: "Hurry up—we can dress under the trees!" with an urgency that seemed almost fear. We grabbed our clothes and ran to the shelter of the dark grove, following one another with long strides; just alike in our nudity: the fragment of a greek vase gone mad. We dressed in the grove, listening to the laughter and horseplay on the shore which we had left. The two young men were trying to persuade seven laughing girls that if they all went in and came out together, no one would have time for any peeping. The girls seemed to waver; the warmth of the night and the gaiety, the sky and water were beguiling them, and finally they gave in, exacting

the absurd promise of blindness from the boys and the more real threat that should any advantage be taken, all of them would beat the offender senseless and leave him at the town garbage-dump as an example.

I heard Justine's voice and it surprised me, it was so light and young, answering a joke, and someone saying loudly (unless it was the pain speaking in us that made it seem so) "Old Mary Emerald is probably home right now, dreaming about you, Nillis, all bare-naked!"

They laughed and guffawed, and there were comments about Mary Emerald. Two hours had been a long time. Here I was, angry at them for her, and we now allies against them; her friends would henceforth be mine, and her enemies also, and all of it as naturally as if I did not hate the world.

When we were dressed, we crept away carefully and soundlessly, and I wondered for a moment why so carefully and so soundlessly. When we were up on the highway I said: "You know, we could have had our evens on them for taking the lake away from us. Once we were dressed we could have gone right up to them and shamed them to a fine, cold sweat."

"Don't you think I thought of that?" I heard a bitterness in the tone. "Look—the way you are, you don't know no better, maybe, but if eight walk the highway together and one takes the old pack-road, it ain't the highway-walkers got to explain, even though there's cars and stink and all, but the one gone by the pack-road has got to say: 'Well, I'd take the highway, but I promised Gram I wouldn't,' or: 'I was out after wild rye,' or: 'Sinai Ellis wanted to and I went along to company him.' "

"Who?"

"Sinai Ellis; that's my brother."

I heard her anger at the unfairness and at the many times that she had begged pardon for herself and been only half-forgiven; for the shaded truths and the uncorrected false impressions. She would never lie, and certainly never wildly, eloquently, as I had done, framing the grotesque and outlandish fantasies that were my form of rebellion at the questions and the cornering. Mary Emerald thought that I didn't know these hard facts of the difference between highway and packroad: I knew them to the bone, drilled in from childhood through a hundred parties and a thousand lapses

of preference and ten-thousand "pleasurable" activities which had no pleasure in them but had burned into leisure and privacy like fire into paper. But she had said these things—stood up and declared them, and I was full of admiration for her.

It was only in the paleness of very early day that I remembered that our singleness was only that of a smaller group, and that the very finding and loving of other rare spirits in the world was, in part, a mirror of the joyful Justine flying to her own flock in a rush of starched skirts and ribbons, found at last.

IV

With the frantic urgency of young people who, with so much less reason than the old, feel that they might die tomorrow, we began to pour ourselves into each other. We knew, even then, that we were not friends, but rather two people who understood one another and could share what had been hidden in ourselves for so long: not the knowledge that a mountain could sound like Lassus or Beethoven, of whom Mary Emerald had never heard, but that it could sound at all. Not that I could only guess at the cruelty of those who peopled Mary Emerald's life, but that I could understand with ease how the saddest word in her vocabulary was "treeless."

One day she came up to the abandoned farm. She knew, as Word did, that when I was there it was a sign of belonging to the world, and then they often came if they wanted to, or called to me, and we would sit among the broken past and talk. When she came she said: "We were finished early today over to the laundry, and I come up to ask you about what I was thinking." I could see the struggle on her face, her wish for the thing, the fear that I would not feel it or understand. Her own consciousness of it made her fumble and at last, in the low, expressionless voice she sometimes had, she said: "I want to have us a Slumber Party and set up in our pajamas and drink cokes and that."

The level voice (I suddenly realized that it was strange now; that she had not been using it) and the profoundly serious eyes above the words made me push back my laughter until it threatened to choke me. One day, who knows how many years ago, some young and curly-haired maiden in the town had picked up the fashion and the parlance from a magazine and had tortured the import

into the rigid mold of this tiny Adirondacks community. The Wrathers were poor and crowded, and Mary Emerald was a strange one and unwelcome in the pleasant and party-giving houses in town. At last she saw a chance for the "amenities" to come to the Wrathers' own place—something genteel, even if in name only, to give a glow to the years about to come. We were fifteen. Here be-ginneth Romeo and Juliet, the proms and the roses and violin music, the boxes of love letters, diaries and lipstick and lace and *La Bohème*. It would come to me and I might scorn it because I was homely but Mary Emerald would never have a single moment of it and she knew it. She must therefore have her Slumber Party, cokes and all.

I said: "How do they usually invite people? Do they just ask them?"

"No—they call up on the phone or they send out the little cards with pictures of cats wearing pajamas or girls or flowers and ribbons."

"Oh," I said. "Well, you'd better send me one of those, I guess." I was being flippant because the whole ridiculous thing was done in such dead seriousness. I was half through when I saw how wrong it was, and I said: "Maybe we had better both choose the cards and send them to everybody who is going to be there." Her face eased.

"I been looking for a while now, and studying on it and there's ideas I got about the best ones to get." She sat down very intently and began to work out our guest list. "You never invite the mothers, and mom'll be sleeping over to Shires' anyway, as she's got extra work there this month. Mary Virgin 'ud love to come but Frank wants her to home 'cause they been just married last year. Of course the boys don't get one so that lets out Matthew Peter and Gideon Lincoln. The rest are all to home. Mary Opal would just laugh and Micah LaFrance and Sinai Ellis are boys and Mary Pearl is too small so none of them need any. Now—" (she had gone over this for a long time, I knew—the figuring was only for me) "Now Gram is old and she won't come, but maybe we should send her one in case she's got a mind to come or maybe just to know that we're giving it."

I said I thought it was a good idea. From her own spark, the glimmer of such a small dream, Mary Emerald was catching fire. She looked at me again for asking, but she was surer now. "The

hardware store's got cards, but they ain't at all like what's to be had over to Cricket Lake." She knew that I would agree.

We went down the hill, borrowed a dollar from Justine, walked the nine and three-quarter miles to Cricket Lake and there purchased three party invitations and three bottles of coke for our Slumber Party. I offered to pay for the coke but Mary Emerald refused. We thumbed a ride back on a vegetable truck, and as I rested against the burning, rattling metal side of the truck I was delighted with myself and with Mary Emerald, who had borrowed a whole dollar—twenty cards' worth—and said nothing to Justine about getting only three. It was early evening when we got home and Mary Emerald left me at the road to Van Rippers'.

"When do you think we ought to have our Slumber Party?"

"Oh, sometime next week."

"I'm off on Thursday, so why don't we make it for Wednesday night." I paused, thinking and considering it, knowing that she wanted me to do it as she must have seen it done at school: the pretty and well-dressed and popular ones, pausing to find place in their heavily mortgaged days and evenings for this party or that. Finally I said: "Yes . . . I think I can make it on Wednesday." She nodded gravely and we turned and left one another. Two days later the invitation arrived in the mail. I knew that the smaller Wrather children would be at the house although Mary Emerald was working, so I wrote a little note of acceptance and took it over.

The young men of the family had married and gone, but their ruins of cars and engines still lay rusting in the front yard. The house was weatherbeaten and old, but the accretion of junk in front of it made it look more like a shack than it really was. Behind the house and to the sides tall pines sang in the light wind. The time-grayed place could have had the air of belonging to its land, of enduring in the same rule as the rock and the pine-tree, but their heaps of gutted, rusted waste seemed to make the Wratheers tyrants of their land and not sharers. The tangled maze of an old bed-spring had been hurled over a broken chair—a kind of parody of a world of possessions. Mary Pearl, the youngest, came from around the side of the house holding a broken pitcher. She turned her cool, poised glance at me, standing by the hump of one of the old car-bodies, and I saw one hand slowly leave the pitcher and go to the wheel-cap and rest there, familiar without the use of sight.

This ruin then, was not for possession, but for barricade. It stood against man and against nature. I had been to the house once before with Mary Emerald at night and had met the children all dimmed with sleepiness. Now recognition came and the little girl turned and went into the house and soon they were all out on the porch, shy and wary with the same grave but level look which the little one had shown. Mr. Wrather, the father, had died three years ago. Now Micah LaFrance, man of the family, said in his child's voice: "Mary Emerald ain't to home." I said the words I had heard her say, hoping to give them something familiar.

"Never mind it. I've got this note for her. You see it to her." Then I turned, a difficult thing with all their eyes on me, and walked back down the path.

I spent the days between walking High Kyrie's stands of trees and berry meadows. The land was in full summer and its ripening weighed the rising air with dusty, warm fruit smells. I gathered berries for the farm and for Mary Emerald and the children. It seemed that there were not buckets enough to hold the plenty. I left great pots full at the abandoned barn for Word until he told me in an agony of shyness that they "laid on his stomach," and then he turned and fled into the birch-grove.

On Wednesday evening I went to Mary Emerald's house with a newly bought overnight bag and bread-and-butter present: a silk scarf which was in fashion then. I had come early; there was to be no moon that night and it was just about sundown. In the long, slanting golden light that came through two windows, the cowed and wide-eyed children stood pressed about the walls. I wondered what Mary Emerald had threatened to them to insure their "good behavior" on our occasion. After a long, strained silence she excused herself and left the house, and at her going a great sigh of ease went up in the darkening room, and Sinai Ellis (whose name had sounded to me like Sign O' Yellows) piped up in a wonderful voice of awe: "She's goin' to the backhouse. She made us clean the floor and burn the trash . . . and she even made us to to wash the winders!"

The doors of their discretion were then unlocked and only Mary Opal, the loyal lieutenant, remained silent. Mary Pearl told about how they had had no time to wash and iron up all the clothes, and everyone giggled and looked importantly at the wardrobe in the

corner. Micah LaFrance pointed to the stacks of draining dishes. It was getting dark. On the wall the faces of the silent dead left us for shadow. The righteous and embarrassed and shaven face of Mary Emerald's father departed in peace. The kerosene lamps were lit and put out on the table and a whisper at my ear said: "See—even the lamp-glasses, and dried off too!"

I thought I heard a light knock at the door, and wanting to help, I went and opened it. A young woman stood delicate and hesitating in the outside evening. Twilight is a flatterer, but as she stood there I thought she was the most beautiful person I had ever seen. Behind me the joyful recognition came: "Its Mary Virgin! It's Mary Virgin come to visit!"

I said: "Oh . . . come in, please—Mary Emerald will be back soon—I'm her friend." I couldn't make myself say her name. As she moved into the room I saw that she was indeed very beautiful. Her face was clear and serene, the features perfect and harmonious. Later, as I saw her—and I kept looking and looking because she was so beautiful—I thought that her face lacked a certain spiritedness and vigor, but at first sight the sweetness of her look and the almost luminous clarity in her skin and eyes made me take in my breath a little as I watched her. She had been wearing a light, loose coat, and as she shook it off, I saw that she was far advanced in pregnancy.

She looked about, knowing the chairs in the house, until she found a steady one and half-sat on it, timidly, as if not trusting her whole self's weight anywhere. Then she said: "Gram told me about Mary Emerald's party and I just got to longing to come. Oh—the house is so clean. . . ." She was looking around at it all. "Everything is so pretty for the party . . ." and then down at the rounded outline of her body: "Frank just let me come to see. I got to be getting back afore long, truly." In the stillness between the little wisps of her sentences we heard Mary Emerald coming around the side of the house. When she came in there was silence, so that she glanced quickly around, looking at one by one of us to see if anything was the matter. Mary Virgin was sitting very still, waiting and smiling. When Mary Emerald saw her there she jumped up and hit the floor hard, letting out a yell of pleasure and the house shook. Again the soft, even voice—a shine of delight but no abandon in it: "Congratulations on your Slumber Party, Mary Emerald, I wisht I

could stay, but Frank wants me to home. He's waiting over to Territ's."

"You walked from Territ's?" I said, trying to sound interested and not surprised. Territ's was a bar on the edge of town, and good three miles away. That would be six miles, three of them in real darkness. She got up, a little more heavily now, and hesitating.

"Can't you stay and have a coke with us?" Mary Emerald said.

"No. I better be starting."

"Do you have a light?" I asked.

"I have a little lantern, but it needs kerosene."

As if it had been a command from an archangel, Micah LaFrance sped for the kerosene, Mary Opal for the match, Mary Pearl and Sinai Ellis to hold the lantern and stand at the door. Mary Virgin had a special kind of wonder for her little sisters and brothers that was more than her name or her mysterious life away from them or her pregnancy. Perhaps it was her beauty, so rare and special a thing in their lives. Whatever magical thing it was, Mary Virgin had come the long way to share, and now we all belonged to the Slumber Party.

"Frank'll laugh sure when I tell him how you took on, seein' me settin' by" she said. She bade goodnight to each one, and they to her. The family had no nicknames—there seemed to be a pride in the possession of time enough for both names, and always a look of pity for me with only one. When I had asked why all the girls' first names were Mary, I was told that Mary was the best name and why should one daughter be more favored than the others? When Mary Virgin's lantern was ready she went out into what was now full night, murmuring from the door the last sounds of goodbye. ". . . I wisht I could have stayed . . . have a good time . . . to your party. . . ."

In a little while we opened the cokes, carefully rationing from the three bottles our six portions. Micah LaFrance, who was a part-time errand boy in town, gave us a few hilarious vignettes of his boss and life in the place—the little pretensions and airs he saw about him. He was ten or so, and he had the gift of seeing those things intuitively now, but soon I knew it would go, vanishing somehow into the muteness of adults in this part of the country. Even with his wit and lightness, a sense of the ceremonial hung over our evening, with its marking of the years. In the light of the

kerosene lamps we all looked so wise. Soon it was time to sleep. Since there were only three beds in the two back rooms and we wanted to be by ourselves, adult and confiding, Mary Emerald and I unrolled old quilts on the front room floor and fell asleep in the heavy, breathing darkness.

V

Now the summer was beginning to age on Kyrie Mountain. Maples and the stands of birch in the groves wore layers of dust on their leaves; the colors were dark and the veins protruded from their coarsened skins like old men's hands. At the farm I had taken over some of Justine's jobs and was finding pride in doing them well. I wrote a letter home describing in detail the round of the farm's day and what I had learned to do there, and with the puzzled response, knew that Mary Emerald, Word, or Kyrie Mountain itself could never be told. Receiving the letter put a film of disappointment between me and the world. I knew that I was not of this land, but the letter made me remember that I was of no land and no place truly. Where the joy was I did not belong; and where I belonged was no joy for me. The only cure for this sadness that I could think of was my mountain. I was going to cut into the wild plum grove and ride on my eyes up the hip of Woman Mountain until I found myself on the top and looking across at the great rhyming surges of Kyrie. Walking the highway I was so down-eyed that I didn't even see Mary Emerald coming toward me with her shopping basket. I was almost face to face with her when she said: "Wherever you was a-going, you must be there now." I jumped, startled, but the image of my own vulnerability suddenly appeared to me and I laughed.

"If the world looks poor and old today maybe I can cheer you. Mary Virgin and me—we want you to stay to dinner to her and Frank's house."

I had thought of myself climbing Woman Mountain and spending a while with my sorrows, going through them room by room, glorying a little in the small sensibilities of that time; both the real and the studied.

"Does she live in town?" I asked.

"Oh no—Frank and his brothers are building them a house near to Yarrow Crossing." It turned the decision for me.

"When do we go?" I asked.

"We're gone now," she said. We went off the highway and Mary Emerald climbed a tree and hung the basket to wait in among the branches.

We walked to Beaumarchais, which everyone called Bowmarches. To the south the land gentled from mountains and pines to hills and long meadows whose borders were great leafing trees. In one long vista over the climb of a hill, a double row of poplars was standing alone and we took in our breaths with the beauty of them. As we stopped, held by looking, she said softly: "Seems a wrong, don't it—to say pretty trees and pretty dresses and pretty shoes, all like it was the same. I once heard a girl say God was swell and the priest heard her and he really got mad, but people put all kinds of things in one and nobody says nothing about it." We went on, looking like drinking as if to pull the sight to satiety, but we were not sated when we left the poplars behind a rise in the land.

After Beaumarchais came water. Creeks and ponds and streams and lakes, one after the other, opened and spread. We crossed bridge after bridge and the sound of water was always with us, even when we didn't see it.

"Yarrow's not too far" Mary Emerald said as we left the town. Behind us a car honked, and when the horn seemed too persistent for flattery and we turned, Mary Emerald said: "There's Frank—he'll give us a lift, maybe."

Both Mary Emerald and Mary Virgin had spoken of Frank with a kind of fear and wonder in their voices and I half expected to see a fork of lightning sitting temporarily harnessed behind the wheel of the car. But as I looked I saw an ordinary-seeming young man—a motionless, almost vacuous face. Mary Emerald went hesitantly to the car, her natural grace all stilted and her voice strained and tenuous. "Hello, Frank" and then: "Are you set to home?" His answer was slow and his smile almost as shy and stilted as hers.

"I'll take you—and your friend too."

I said: "Hello, Frank, I'm pleased to meet you" and we started off.

Frank asked Mary Emerald about the family and she answered very politely with too much reserve, I thought, for a relative, a be-

loved sister's closest life in the world. When we came in sight of the raw-looking clapboard house standing on a bald knoll, Mary Emerald praised the building elaborately and the strength and perseverance of Frank and his brothers. For a time I listened to the undertone in her voice, sounding as loud to me as the words she said. It was fear—a strong, abiding fear—and I looked away, wondering if Frank had heard it or understood. She was saying, under her words: Will a man take *me* away one day, by some drawing force that I do not know, defenseless, to a treeless barren knoll to bear children and cook for him and be bound to his sins and faults forever? Sitting in the old car with Mary Virgin's husband, Mary Emerald and I shuddered together.

The car stopped at the bottom of the hill and we got out, looking up at the house. The door opened and Mary Virgin stepped out, moving gingerly about the wooden planks and building things in the yard.

"She's getting on to her time" Frank said, smiling again in embarrassment, and I hated the smile because I could not determine whether it was for himself or because of her swollen body.

"Are you all ready for the time?" Mary Emerald asked tightly.

"Oh, we ain't havin' no midwife—she got her head set on the hospital care." He breathed out heavily, thinking of the cost, I knew, and I hated him for that too because I was intolerant of the weight he bore in their pregnancy—the money weight, the worry weight, the weight of another's possessions gathering week by week in his house. Shyly, Mary Virgin was waiting for us as we walked up the hill toward her, arranging the folds of her dress and apron, her hands always moving to hide and moving to hide across the middle. When we got to the door, Mary Emerald again repeated the praises she had just given Frank about the splendor of the house, and for a while Mary Virgin walked about, showing us this feature and that, saying where she would set out some plants next year and where the baby would play in the sun. Then the two of us were sent down to the stream with buckets for water, for they had not finished their well. The idea of water in the house sent Mary Emerald into raptures and she fluttered her fingers like a lady of luxuries, but as we went down from the knoll to where the stream flowed hard and cold against the scoured rocks of its chan-

nel, she said: "If there's no need to go into the cold in winter when the stars freeze like to burn you—then—you don't go, and you miss the stars and the smell of the cold or the way the trees are then."

"I guess we do need reasons," I said, walking into the stream and feeling the sick shock of the cold water running up from my feet and ankles. We stood together there, filling our buckets, blue-lipped with cold, and in her worry for her sister and fear for herself, since the world was colder than the stream sometimes, Mary Emerald said: "Frank's a good man—he isn't one to get drunk and beat up or take after other girls or that, but Mary Virgin is loving of trees almost as much as me and there ain't but wind going to blow on that knoll years . . . and years."

"Is she happy?" I asked, hearing again in my mind the almost timorous breath of Mary Virgin's refusal to join us at our party: "Frank wants me to home . . ." and the widening of her eyes as she had said it. Mary Emerald looked at me with the water running over her bucket.

"She says she is—but she don't come and see us to tell us much any more." I knew she had caught a little of the wind of her own loneliness in what she was saying, so we took our buckets and went back up the hill to the house without speaking.

Dinner was as I had guessed it. Micah LaFrance, Mary Opal, Sinai Ellis and Mary Pearl turned up, having walked from home. We had great heavy dishes of potatoes, bread, and venison canned from last fall's hunting. There was little talk while we ate, but every word or grunt from Frank was greeted with the reverent attention due a nugget of Socrates. When he took his toothpick and went out to sit by the car, we all relaxed and felt free again, and by the time the water for the dishes had heated, we were laughing and joking. When we had finished and were putting things away, I said: "It's a pity Frank isn't here to laugh at that one!"

"Oh, it's not to tell Frank!" Mary Emerald said, hiding her mouth with her hand. She should have hidden her eyes instead, for the little look of fear that ran across them. "Oh, not Frank!" Mary Virgin said also, laughing too, a little.

"Good night, listening to you two almost makes me think you are afraid of Frank" I said, wishing I could really ask and really know. To my surprise Mary Virgin's face did grow graver and she turned her head up a little bit, like a puzzled child.

"Men's ways are different" she said quietly. And then very slowly: "Yes . . . I am afraid. Frank is everything in the whole world and he don't know it. If he takes a notion—even some small thing to him, it may be my whole life changed for me forever. And maybe . . . maybe in the middle of the notion . . . to die. . ."

I remembered, with a new stab of recognition, the picture of Mr. Wrather on the wall of the Wrathers' cabin. It was of him that she was speaking now, and she was in another time, standing there with the towel in her hand in the middle of her kitchen, she was possessing again a body and a heart long put by. Frank was one of the powerful race, the notional race: one with her father. Matthew Wrather had left his home and family with half the winter yet to endure. Hunger and misery and loneliness had followed his passing. He had fathered eight and had favored his first daughter above all the others, and he had died. Now there was another of that race who was a universe to her, and who was also mortal. Slowly the thirteen-year-old Mary Virgin melted into the waiting mother of seventeen, with the calm, ethereal look her older face had in its stillness.

When it was dark Frank said he would drive us all home. We thanked him again and again.

VI

On the shoulder of High Kyrie three trees had gone a brilliant yellow. Suddenly I saw that the summer which I had dared myself to spend freely and without stint was running into its last weeks, and that I was not ready for its closing. I walked through every grove and on every ridge and hill I knew, to fill my eyes and complete them. I wanted to ask Word so many questions too. Did men know they were the whole world? And also—why was it that living with trees, mountains and vast sweeps of sky, every man and woman in this country was not a poet or an artist, or at the very least a sort of saint. When I did ask him he passed a long moment and looked out at the swells of land falling down beneath where we stood and then said abruptly: "Ye ready for a climb—? There's that you ain't seen yet." I said I was and we began making for the crown of the mountain. As we went he said: "About the first—about men knowing they're everything—I answer yes. We do know

we're everything, but we know it one way. When we get older we know it another way, but the words ain't changed. It's almost a whole opposite way of feelin' but the words ain't changed." He turned. "Do you understand that?" He said it almost like an attack. I said I did. "It's why I give up a lot of the words atween me and them." And he waved his hand off to show me the valley and the world. "Second thing is maybe this: the hills ain't responsible, and they bear men is patient even if they ain't angels. Hill-folk ain't city-great, they're hill-great and they got what the hills got. I read out of some books sometime back, and I found that all that some call eye for beauty is nothin' but the sick man takin' his own pulse all day—how do I feel and how hard am I sweatin'. He looked a little hopeless and cornered: the "Justine" look. "I'll just take you to Eloy."

We walked up to the top of the whole beautiful mountain and I kept wondering all the time where he could take me that I did not already know. To cap it he said by way of reassurance: "Just whatever happens, don't get frightened."

We crossed over the summit with its bramble-covered rocks and long, wind-winnowed grasses and went down the southwest side into the tree-grove. Parting the grove which had become a forest as it sloped downward, was a great cleft, the ancient and dried-up spillway of what had once been a mighty waterfall. As the wind blew across the trees Word gestured with his finger and whispered: "Hear that?—sounds like the memory o' water, don't it? It ain't though, it's the wind upcuttin' the rocks to the far side. It blows across there. I think it's our knowing what was here once and remembering for what's gone is giving us that water sound in our ears."

I had often seen the spillway and the dark chasm, but Word said: "Come on—we're a-going to walk that gully now." That I had never done. It was a fearsome and dangerous climb down, on water-smooth rocks that seemed to hang over yards of air to the brutal fall of the chasm. When a rock slipped under Word's foot and hit, clunk . . . clunk . . . clunk all the long way down, I heard the sound like the breaking of my own bones in fall. At last we neared the bottom and Word threw his head back and shouted: "Eloy! Eloy." There was no answer, and we kept going down. After a while "Eloy Eloy" again, and then Word grated my rib with an

elbow to get my attention and pointed to a stand of three scrub pine a hundred feet or so further in the gully. I saw nothing. "Where?"

"There—there, over by the tree."

Against his background the man was almost invisible, and I had to pick him out, a bit of him at a time. I had seen the same kind of brownness of face and clothing in Word himself when I had first laid eyes on him, but now the surprise was not that the man seemed to merge with nature, but that he was standing, wary and still, with a great heavy rifle aimed straight at us. Word edged close to me to whisper: "Can't but admire him. He's blind as a bat—born blind, but he's too proud to admit it even to the ones knows him."

He called out: "Oh Eloy, put your gun up. I brung a lady to you, and she's like to faint now, you gone scard her!"

There was no word spoken; only a moment of silence and the shattering sound of the gunshot. "Eloy!" And then the second shot, a terrible sound in that deep well of rock and earth. Cursing, Word scrambled up the canyon side, I following too terrified to make a sound. Fear had made me clumsy and I stumbled several times, wakening little stones and earth to fall from my footholds and expecting each misstep to bring a shot in reprisal. After a while Word said: "We're out of his range, now." We were both panting heavily.

"I guess it's just Eloy's way" Word said simply. "If he'd uv wanted us he'd not uv shot."

"But why—with a gun when—he could—have told—us" I panted.

"Well—there's men born blind and men come blind, and he's both. Man don't know he's blind less someone tells him so, and when Eloy found out, he got so angry that he come down here and stayed ever since. Now he's a hard man—but that's his pride. I don't know what got to him to do that way." I saw that Word was a little angry in my defense. "I have spoke to him a long time, sometimes, and what he says is a right lot into the thing. . . ."

As I recovered my breath I suddenly found that I was almost crying. What had happened to the virtues I had always praised? I had only this minute recognized all of them in Eloy: the independence, bluntness, unsophistication, hard sharp will, scorn of

loving. . . . These had always been my loudest wishes, and here they were in a perfect mirror, and I was not pleased with them. I wondered now if even Word held Eloy's wisdom as highly as he had before. Word had once said: "I'm lonely some, but no more than I ought to be." It had also seemed a virtue to be lonely, once.

When we reached the top of the chasm and stood in our own lands again, we looked out over the fall, and Word, mistaking my look of almost weeping and wishing to make up for the barren labor, opened with cautiousness a part of his own long hidden past.

"I come to wonder on that question of yours—how there ain't more poets. I don't know much about them, but I wonder now how there ain't more preachers and prophets like there used to be. . . ." Then he said suddenly: "You know they laugh at me over to town—they always have too, seeing I hate hunting. Hereabouts boys grow up shooting just like part of their nature. Now I started to think on a time when I was with two boys right over there on Woman Mountain. I was still in the way where I was tryin' to fight myself for what I ought to like or hate. Abraham La Foret spotted him a buck deer and he shot and hit it and the buck come turning in a big leap that was a beauty to see, but he landed dying and all spraddled out and wrong, breaking his legs because he had stopped living in the middle of that leap. When we got to him he was dead. I looked at the thing, and it was like a drawing that school-kids make; it looked so stupid with its eyes gone hard and drying up. It was so changed that it made me start to shake. Just then old Alonzo La Foret, Abraham's grandpop, showed up and them boys just started to go on: ain't it beautiful, and all. I didn't say nothing, just stood by and tried to forget I was there. Then someone took up that I wasn't saying nothing, and so they say: what does Word think—what does Word say about it, and ain't it a beauty, Word? . . . You know, Eloy found out he was blind on a day like that day was for me. He went off, but I had to stay there, knowing from then on that whatever it was I was supposed to have in me, I just didn't have it. I said: 'Word says it looks like a dead cow. It's big and it's dead and that's all you can say for it now.' The living part got left behind in that leap. Their mouths just hung slack, and that Abraham started to double him up a fist for a fight, but old Alonzo La Foret just stepped up a little and said—

I'll never forget the words of it, just like he said them: 'The only difference atween you boys is the eyes you bring to this.' Then they took up the buck deer and headed home."

The light was beginning to go. It held in the yellow trees of the birchgrove and drew brightness in narrowing lines through the nets of the pines. The summer wind, with its smell of the sun-warmed rock and the berry thickets was gone. Here was a cold, clear wind from the top of the whole range. It was an autumn wind from which even the mountain's lovers seek warm shelter. For the first time Word and I walked together down the mountain and the dark came on behind us.

VII

I found Mary Emerald at the farm waiting for me. She let me come close before she spoke, as if the confidence was so deep that she must whisper it.

"Mary Virgin's time come this morning. She's gone to the hospital now and we got to wait for Ma to come and then go tell Gram and Gramps about it." We walked down the road in the fast on-coming night. "We'll go home and wait" Mary Emerald said, "I got to get the lantern." I wondered how far it was to wherever Gram and Gramps lived. I was tired from the climb to see Eloy, and things were happening too fast to take time to turn them over or give them a look or two before I put them away. When we got to the Wrathers' shack we saw no lights there so Mary Emerald lit the lantern and we sat for a while in the cold front room. At last she said: "No use making a fire if we have to leave. I'm going outside and get something to take to Gram."

We took the lantern out behind the house and up a little rise. Working in its light Mary Emerald bent down and began to pick stalks of wild rye. She showed me how it grew and where to pluck the strawlike stalks with their heavy heads of seeds that Gram would bake into her bread. I had eaten the seeds in bread in the city, but here there was a special taste to them, chewing a few in the cold, dark night as we waited for a new excitement, tired and groping out of the dim circle of lantern light to pick the fragile straws. Fresh, cold, sleepy and funny. Suddenly it all came on me so that I threw myself on the ground full length and began to laugh. I laughed until I howled, my lungs heaving with breath, and Mary

Emerald was soon laughing with me, puzzled but consenting. I caught my wind for explanation and said: "Not moonlight—picking rye in the moonlight is romantic, but here, with a lantern—I" and I was off again, laughing as wide as the sky I saw above me.

We gathered some more before the car drove up, and when Mary Emerald saw it bumping over the footpath, she snatched the light and we both went quickly to the front of the house to show that we were there. It was Frank, and Mary Emerald stepped back when she saw him, too awed by one so heavy with the power in newness of his great happening. He seemed to take some of the great mystery of the happening itself, and he had only to say: "Well, she's borned us a little girl" and we let out our breath before his mighty involvement with the forces of nature.

Mary Emerald said in her low voice: "Is she good? We're a-going to tell Gram and Gramps now."

Frank said: "She seemed okay when I was by. You tell them and I'll go get some sleep now." He turned the motor over and it shivered and grunted into an idle. "Your Ma's with Mary Virgin and then she's going back to Shires and taking the kids with her."

"Do you need cooking or washing to home?" Mary Emerald asked.

"No—my sisters been seein' to me." And the foolish man turned his car and rode away. She had tensed beside me, and had there been light I would have seen that short little whip of muscle tighten for an instant on both sides of the impassive face. Frank never realized how his sisters were interlopers in Mary Virgin's kitchen. Could he only have said that he was fine and gone his way! I cursed him rudely in my mind because I knew that the Frank driving away in his old car would never hear it.

We started out for Gram and Gramps' and I was about to ask how far it was, pitying my own weariness a little, when Mary Emerald turned, pointing out the light of a cabin no more than five-hundred feet down the path on which we were walking. I had often passed the place going down the highway and seeing it through the trees, thinking it was deserted. It was an old, weathered place with a steeply sagging porch and bare as the Wrathers' shack was barricaded. I had never dreamed that anyone was living in it; even seeing the light made me think of some old tramp sleeping his single night on the warped plank floor and

cursing his ill-fitting bones; but as we came up to the house I saw that it was sturdier than it appeared. Mary Emerald warned me about the porch and when we had climbed up on the crying, swaying layers, like a boat, she knocked at the door and shouted: "Gram! Gramps!" After a while the door did really open and my eyes hurried ahead inside to a warm cluttered room far from the bareness I had imagined. The woman was very old, the man seemed even older, and we came in very quietly because of it. In a small, almost genteel voice I was introduced. They were very shy until I sat down and said some small thing, and then the old lady leaned forward and touched my arm.

"I heerd about you and Word scarin' each other up to the Mar-ranses place—out'n the barn" she said, and I laughed, a little impatiently because it was the only thing that could draw me to their circle and she was using it, yet I had tired of the laughter from it and would not have been surprised if the most remote of all the mountain kin had heard it to tell it back to me at the ends of the earth. Perhaps for feeling or by coincidence, Mary Emerald said: "Gram knowed Word when he was just a young'un and hired out to Marrens."

The old lady said: "I knowed Word when he were bare half-a-letter," and we all laughed at that, Gram holding her hand across her mouth daintily, while the tough, gnarled cords of her neck stood out, giving the lie to the delicate gesture. I suffered a little for my own plainness then, seeing hers. Seventy years of hard winters and buckets of water, bearing children, fighting the cold and the threat of hunger, carrying and cooking. It was too late for delicacy.

Mary Emerald said: "Gram—Mary Virgin had them a little girl." The old lady looked satisfied.

"I been expectin' it'ud be sooner than them doctors said. She done good, didn't she?"

"I don't know if it come hard or easy" Mary Emerald said, sounding a little lost, even in the comfort of the room. "Frank ain't one for much news." They talked on for a while about babies and birthing, Gram with a sort of impersonal cheer that seemed strange to me. Perhaps there had been so many—. I looked over at Gramps, sitting on the sagging bed with his pipe materials spread out in front of him. Gram was telling a story about some long dead

woman's long dead cousins. It went on for quite a time and I waited for some point to it, half listening for the drop in voice that would mark the end. As she went on I looked about at the room, going over the expected things, and feeling a little bored: the wall, where the swollen-faced madonna hung, the gaudy calendar, ancient pictures of the family, the dried palm-fronds, the sentimental scenes ripped out of magazines and tacked up here and there; but as I turned from that wall to the other I saw Mary Emerald. Her eyes were hard on her grandmother and she was straining for every word. Something like nourishment for an old starvation was taking place, given from the old woman to Mary Emerald, and the restoring was in nothing so abstract as spirit or the eyes of love, or even Gram's hand that badgered and worried every now and then at Mary Emerald's arm. It was in the words themselves. I wondered what could be so vital in the happenings of unknown people now dead and gone. She had stopped talking about Cousin Jane Tredway apparently, and was now busy with a "Clara whose daughter married a Sprue." I stood up, listening, and after a while I found myself sharing in a long history of which Mary Emerald Wrather was a present link. Letitia Bowmarch and cousin Jane, and Clara and Mary Emerald also, although Gram did not say so, had all been left fatherless and thus motherless; had all had older sisters whom they had taken to their souls as mothers and had lost again to marriage. All of these women had suffered—some wisely and some unwisely, but the anguish was old and venerable with Gram's telling—worthy to grow into and grow over. But for Mary Emerald the anguish was still blood-red. I had been too busy to see just how lonely and hungering she was, too new to know how long and deep the pain had been borne.

"What happened to Clara when her sister's baby was borned?" Mary Emerald was asking.

"Well, you know, that Clara was proud, and her sister was some too proud herself. She left that cold house of ther'un with her great tall man and she never come back no more nor tried to keep them kids in mind. Them Bournes was all quiet folk. Clara never said nothin', nor made like she cared at all, but when the baby come, she left where she was and she run into their house and snatched it right out'n the midwife's hands and held it up like to hurt it. Well, Alice's great big tall man was no more good than a sick

puppy, a cryin' and a pleadin'. It was Missy Chester made Clara put the baby down and then that quiet Bourne girl throwed the biggest, longest screamin' fit was ever seen in this country. It was the beginning of her daylight in her mind, and Alice done some humblin' too, after that. Clara went an married Stokes' oldest boy later. Ha! He was the only one of all them Stokeses worth the dirt it took to bury 'em."

Gramps brought her a pipe which he had been filling for her and she took a series of short, gleeful puffs on it. Shyly, because of me, he asked after the family. Were they wanting? He would fish this week, he said. I knew that he could not speak his mind as Gram had done, and that it labored him to talk around me to Mary Emerald about things so close to him, so I asked her to see me to the highway and I said goodbye.

It was a very quiet music I heard from the great body of Kyrie Mountain as I came toward the farm. My eyes won the shapes of trees and road from the darkness, and with the music it seemed that the whole world at last was one single element in which I fully and finally belonged. There was no longer need to ask a Gram to name the generations of those whose vitals had suffered the pain of this particular sword, or, when the brief times of peace and easement came to puzzle them, wondered with fear and awe how they could bear the thrust again.

VIII

I wrote home for another week of grace, not daring to say that I had things to finish and a mountain to seal inside myself forever, and that I wanted to give Mary Emerald a gift. I knew what it was to be the first time I heard them all talk about starting school again. I had seen and known their poverty naturally and casually, as they lived it during the summer, but when they spoke of the school, their ill-fitting clothes and uncut hair—worst of all, their shaming ignorance—I knew that I had the one gift for Mary Emerald that I was born to give her and that she could best use. We were subdued, talking of winter and my leaving. Every moment the mountain was changing around us as we sat among the foundations of the deserted house. The wind had a fresh smell, and the quietness of its passage was sad after the bright, hot noise of cicadas and the ticking of a thousand insect lives of summer.

I said: "Mary Emerald—maybe I could come and visit you at school for a day to see what it's like there? . . ." She said she would ask, and we went on with our talk of other things, taking long pauses and drinking the whole land in with our love.

"Word said that Eloy told him once that the earth reverences men just as much as they reverence it."

"I don't know. . . ." Mary Emerald said, "It don't seem that the pines care or the poplar trees we seen on toward Mary Virgin's reverence me at all." I thought for a brief moment that I heard an edge of bitterness. It had been enough to love before Mary Virgin had married and gone, but now the yearning turned, however timidly, for answer.

The next day Mary Emerald hurried over to tell me that I could come to school with her. She had stored her eagerness until its promise could be made real, and this prudence, which I had once thought strange in the people of a generous land, was now clear to me and seemed natural and good.

We walked to the town early in the morning, and for Mary Emerald's sake I humbled myself for that one irretrievable day to hate the bright edge of the wind. My hair was a glorious mass of curls. I sprouted ribbons, I crinkled and jingled—Mary Emerald's City Friend To Whom The Things Of The Great World Were Commonplace. Let no brisk-handed mountain-born wind dare disarrange me. I was a confection. We came to the town and then went beyond it to where the Consolidated School brooded on its slaty hill. The school building was modern, but it had a dullness in square lines unrelieved by anything fanciful or decorative—not even a design in the bricks. It was only here, for the first time since I had gone away from a city I hated, that I remembered a part of it with joy: my school and all the schools there, with their mad, individual and Misfit-Byzantine, Crenellated Woolworth, Hackensack-Romanesque buildings. I had gone to classes at a school above whose cornerstone of mayor and dignitaries a ceramic plaque was firmly bedded. Carved into this and baked to last was the legend: Joseph Runciman O'Callahan Hoc Me Fecit. I had loved Joseph Runciman O'Callihan, hated him, feared and gloried in him, but I had never been indifferent to him, as these students were.

Mary Emerald and I began to walk up the short hill to the building, playing our parts very deftly and smoothly, as if she had

no one to introduce and I no one to impress. She presented me to her home-room teacher and when the bell rang we rose together, the two of us, into our destinies for the day. Although I was plain and knew I could do nothing about it, I had fought it with curls, and I also let it be known during the course of the morning that I could read Greek and Latin and spoke German conversationally at home, could joke in Hebrew and count to ten in Gaelic and Japanese. I labored my humility too, admitting ruefully that I found both French and Chinese difficult. To our great joy, *Romeo and Juliet* was being read lackadaisically in English class, and when I was asked if I wanted to share in the reading, I did so, of course, from memory. Mary Emerald was shining as I had never seen her do, laughing and using all the tricks of feigned modesty that most girls learn young. At lunch she let me know who had been kind to her and those were the ones with whom I permitted myself to laugh. I was working the point a little, I knew, but there was only one day to give Mary Emerald Wrath the "Powerful Friends In The City" that I wanted her to have. We laughed over our little secret jokes together and I managed to leave before my curls fell. Our day had been a lucky and wonderful triumph, greater and sweeter because she never thanked me, which would have meant touching the thing and thus marring it. For myself, I only wondered a little if, with all the feeding that the summer had given me, I had grown in any way. It didn't seem to me that I was any more competent or quick-witted. I had known and loved Kyrie Mountain and respected the people of its shadow, but this wasn't ancient Greece, where an enemy might see, standing behind his adversary, the mighty shadow of a protecting god or goddess. I wanted the whole of Kyrie Mountain for a crown, so that I could walk showing all the world the glory of what I loved.

On the last day I met Mary Emerald, knowing that when my parents came to take me away, I would have to show her to them and them to her, though neither would ever know what the other was. We stood looking up at the three waves of the mountain. The changing trees were in their fullest color and the wind blowing over them made their colors vibrate like sounds with overtones. I thought of how the air vibrated in the heat of summer, and how in moonlight too, the dead spaces thrummed with life.

"We'll miss you when you're gone to the city," Mary Emerald

said absently. Mr. Van Riper had said the same thing earlier that day and I had been astonished that he had noticed me enough to know that I was going.

I turned to Mary Emerald as if she were a fellow mourner at a funeral and said: "What can I take with me? What can I keep of all of this?" She was thinking of them—the family and Gram and Mary Virgin, the pain of loss and the end of summer, and perhaps of what I had witnessed and heard with them all. She answered, not trying to say anything special: "We'll be the taste of wild rye." I began to cry a little then, hearing a car pull up in front of the farm. When its engine stopped there was utter quietness. I looked at my mountain and said: "For He who is mighty has done great things for me and Holy is His Name."

Mary Emerald turned with me to go to the car, and she said: "You always talk so nice."

LOUIS SIMPSON

The Marriage of Pocahontas

These episodes are taken
From Captain, sometimes Governor, John Smith's
Generall Historie of Virginia,
New England, and the Summer Isles.

How far he tells the truth,
Seeing that he was baiting hooks
To catch investors,
I leave to the reader's judgment.
This, for example,
From his epistle to a duchess,
To my mind shows a theatrical
Extravagant spirit:

"When I was slave to the Turkes,
The beauteous Lady Tragabigzanda
Did all she could to secure me.
When I overcame the Bashaw of Nalbrits,
The charitable Lady Callamata
Supplied my necessities.
In the utmost of many necessities,
That blessed Pocahontas,
The great Kings daughter of Virginia,
Oft saved my life."

Lady Tragabigzanda!
Lady Callamata!
Not to mention the Bashaw of Nalbrits!

But we may be too suspicious
In this too timid age.
When the world was expanding, language wore
Big breeches and odd jerkins and strange sleeves.

So then, this is the story
Of Smith's extremities
And King Powhatan and his dearest daughter.

1. Pocahontas Saves His Life

At last they brought him to Meronocomo
Where was Powhatan their Emperor.
More than two hundred of those grim courtiers
Stood wondering at him,
As he had been a monster,
Till Powhatan and his train
Had put themselves in their greatest braveries.

Before a fire upon a seat
The King sat covered with a robe
Of rarowcun skins, and all the tails hanging by.
On either side sat a young wench
Of sixteen or eighteen years;
Along each side of the house, two rows of men;
Behind them, as many women,
With all their heads and shoulders painted red;
Many of their heads bedecked
With the white down of birds;
But everyone with something,
And a great chain of beads about their necks.

At his entrance before the King
All the people gave a great shout.
The queen of Appamatuck
Brought him water to wash his hands;
Another, a bunch of feathers to dry them.

Having feasted him after their best barbarous manner,
A long consultation was held,
But the conclusion was
Two great stones were brought before Powhatan;
Then as many as could

Laid hands on the Captain
And dragged him to the stones
And thereon laid his head,
Being ready with their clubs to beat out his brains.

Pocahontas, the King's dearest daughter,
When no intreaty could prevail,
Got his head in her arms,
And laid her own upon his to save him from death.

Whereat the Emperor was contented
He should live to make him hatchets,
And her, bells, beads, and copper.

2. Savage Entertainment

Suddenly among the woods was heard
Such a hideous noise and shrieking
That the English betook them to their arms
Supposing Powhatan with all his power
Was come to surprise them.

But presently Pocahontas came,
Willing them to kill her
If any hurt was intended.
Then they were presented with this antic.

Thirty young women came naked out of the woods,
Covered only before and behind
With a few green leaves,
Their bodies all painted, but differing.
Their leader had buck's horns on her head,
An otter's skin at her girdle,
Another at her arm,
A quiver of arrows at her back,
A bow and arrows in her hand.
The next had in her hands a sword,
Another a club,

Another a pot-stick—
All horned alike,
The rest with their several devices.

These fiends with most hellish sounds and cries
Rushing from among the trees,
Cast themselves in a ring about the fire,
Singing and dancing with most excellent
Ill variety,
Or falling into their infernal passions,
And solemnly again to sing and dance.
And as they entered, in like manner departed.

Having reaccommodated themselves,
They invited him to their lodgings,
Where he was no sooner in the house
But all these nymphs
More tormented him than ever
With crowding, pressing, and hanging about him,
Crying "Love you not me?
Love you not me?"
This salutation ended, the feast was set,
Consisting of all the savage dainties,
Some attending, others singing and dancing.

Which mirth being ended,
With fire-brands for torches
They conducted him to his lodging.

3. A Dialogue of Peace and War

The subtle savage, Powhatan,
Said, "Many do inform me,
Your coming hither is not for trade,
But to invade my people and possess my country.
To free us of this fear
Leave aboard your weapons.

“I know the difference of peace and war,
But now I am old and ere long must die.
What will it avail you to take by force
What you may quickly have by love?
Think you, I am so simple
Not to know it is better
To eat good meat,
Lie well, and sleep quietly,
Laugh and be merry with you,
Have copper, hatchets, or what I want,
Than to be forced to fly from all,
To lie cold in the woods,
Feed upon acorns, roots, and other trash,
And be so hunted by you
That I can neither rest, eat, nor sleep,
But my tired men must watch,
And if a twig break, everyone crieth
‘There cometh Captain Smith!’

“And thus with miserable fear
End my miserable life,
Leaving my pleasures to such youths as you,
Which through your rashness
May quickly as miserably end.

“Let this therefore assure you of our loves,
And every year our friendly trade
Shall furnish you with corn.
Then come not thus with your guns and swords
As to invade your foes.”

The Captain answered,
“Every day your promise is violated
By some of your subjects.
For your sake only we have curbed
Our thirsting desire of revenge.
As for danger from our enemies,
In such is our chief pleasure.

For your riches we have no use.
And if you should fly to the woods,
We shall not starve, as you conclude,
For we have means to find beyond your knowledge."

The King breathed his mind once more.
"None doth deny to lie at my feet,
Or refuse to do what I desire,
But only you.
If you intend so friendly as you say,
Send hence your arms."

The Captain said,
"Tomorrow I will leave my arms
And trust to your promise."

4. Pocahontas Reveals a Plot

Pocahontas, his dearest jewel,
In that dark night came through the irksome woods,
And told our Captain
Great cheer should be sent us by and by,
And when we were at supper
They that brought it would kill us all
With our own weapons.
But if that plot should fail,
Powhatan and all his power
Would after come to kill us.

Such things as she delighted in
He would have given her,
But with the tears running down her cheeks
She said she dared not be seen to have them,
For if Powhatan knew, she were but dead.
And so she ran away by herself as she came.
Within less than an hour
Came eight or ten lusty fellows
With platters of venison and other victual,

Very importunate to have us
Put out our matches
Whose smoke, they said, made them sick.

But the Captain made them taste every dish,
Which done he sent them back to Powhatan
To bid him make haste
For he was prepared for his coming.

5. She is Betrayed and Captured

Captain Argall
Had promised Japazaws and his wife
A copper kettle
To bring her to him,
Promising no way to hurt her,
But keep her till they could conclude
A peace with her father.

And thus they betrayed the poor innocent
Pocahontas aboard,
Where they were kindly feasted in the cabin,
Japazaws treading oft on the Captain's foot
To remember he had done his part.

Then Argall told her she must go with him
And compound peace between her country and us
Before she ever should see Powhatan.
Whereat the Judas, Japazaws, and his wife
Began to howl and cry
As fast as Pocahontas.

Upon the Captain's fair persuasions
Pacifying her by degree,
Japazaws and his wife
With the kettle and other toys
Went merrily on shore.

6. Her Wedding

Master John Rolfe, an honest gentleman,
Had been in love with Pocahontas,
And she with him.

Which thing when I made known
By letter to Sir Thomas Dale,
He well approved.
And the bruit of this marriage coming to Powhatan,
It was acceptable to him,
As appeared by his sudden consent.
For within ten days
He sent Opachisco, her uncle, and two of his sons,
To see the manner of this marriage,
Which was about the first of April.

And ever since we have had
Friendly trade and commerce
As well with Powhatan himself
As all his subjects.

The true affection she bore for her husband,
And the strange apparitions and violent passions
He endured for her love, as he deeply protested,
Were wonderful.
And she openly renounced idolatry,
Confessed the faith of Christ,
And was baptised.

7. Powhatan Laughs

The first thing the King did,
He offered me a pipe of tobacco.
Then asked me how his brother
Sir Thomas Dale did, and his daughter
And unknown son,
And how they lived, loved and liked.

I told him his brother was well,
And his daughter so contented
She would not live again with him;
Whereat he laughed.

8. A Dream in the Woods of Virginia

I dreamed that in a wood,
Clasped as in silver when the moon
Shone clear, a woman stood.

Lady with horns,
And bow and arrow, and an otter skin,
Singing "Love you not me?"—I love you not.

Give up your naked ways,
Except a few green leaves,
Your cunning ambush where the coney plays.

Put on a skirt and hood.
Marry perhaps an English gentleman.
Though never English, you may still be good.

When I set out on my journey
It was high summer,
But now it was cold and snow lay on the ground.

I came to the great hall
Where Powhatan was sitting, with his braves
Beneath him in two rows along the wall.

I spoke. They seemed to hear.
They did not speak or move.
Then suddenly they shouted—

A great wind
Rushed through the hall, the torches guttered out,
And the night was filled with sound.

W. D. SNODGRASS

Manet: The Execution of Emperor Maximilian

Giving a gold coin to each soldier, he said, "Aim well, muchachos; aim right here," pointing to his heart. He waited with face turned upward, grave but calm.

Miramón and Mejías fell at once, but a second volley was required for the Emperor; he had wished to be shot in the body so that his mother might see his face.

The body, mutilated but fairly well preserved, was finally returned to Vienna where it received the full funereal honors of the Hapsburgs whose downfall was prefigured in his death. Upon the Hill of Bells, the place of execution, the Austrian Empire erected a small but elegant chapel.

These bunched soldiers, just now shooting the emperor,

Stand with heels together, toes out, like ballet girls,

Though less tensely. In the main, we are made aware

Of their white spats or white leather sabre-holsters.

They must suspect this is some notable affair

Seeing their own parade uniforms and dress gear;

Yet one of them has shown up late—naturally—

For this, the probable high point of his career,

And stands away to the one side, carefully

Cocking his rifle. And yet he might be, perhaps—

Since his uniform seems a trifle less gaudy,

With less braid but with a white band on a red hat—

An officer who's waiting to give the body

The coup de grace. Meantime, all elegance and polish,

The men bend to their guns as if sighting some hard shot

At the billiard tables; one they *might* accomplish

Yet they would hardly be disgraced, if they should not.

In 1867, deserted by Napoleon III and the Pope, surrounded by intrigue and corruption, Maximilian assumed personal command of the remaining forces. On May 15, General Lopez (elsewhere erroneously called Gomez) betrayed Maximilian's headquarters at Queretaro for 20,000 pesos. Once captured, Maximilian steadfastly rejected all schemes of Napoleon's agents to spirit him away.

The peasants, peering up over the flat rock wall
Which is the background, sprawl on their elbows or lay
Their heads on their crossed arms, like men who have gone dull
In a tavern, or who must watch through a whole day
Of third-rate matadors practising on the farm.
No doubt they were drawn by the marching and the death
drums,
The hope of gunflash or sight of the uniforms.
How seldom anything splendid, decisive comes
Into their lives. And so they have kept their places
For hours, logy as flies, out in the hot sun,
Knowing none of the names and none of the faces.
Surely someone must tell them what it means, someone
Speak of nobility; proclaim that they are free.
The daily quarrels and flirtatiousness go on.
Dusty as hollyhocks, their clustering faces are
Vague as the rocks in the wall, from which they might be
An outgrowth—cool, distant, irrelevant as stars.

Having first naturalized the Swiss banker, Jecker, so they might use Mexico's debts to him as a pretext for intervention, the French staged a fraudulent plebiscite to convince Maximilian he had been overwhelmingly elected by the peons. When Maximilian remained unconvinced, Napoleon threatened to offer the crown to some other candidate.

Yet, for Maximilian, of whom all must agree
He was intelligent, amiable, well-bred,
Generous even when one might scarce dare to be,
Given to high ideals though frequently misled;

Whose face should show that firm nobility discerned
 Only in this bearded soldier of whom we know
 Nothing; Maximilian for whom whole nations mourned;
 Two of whose generals decided not to go
 Free, but died by him; whose wife, Carlotta, endured
 Sixty years mad with loss, hidden in a convent
 Where though she lost her worst fears, she always referred
 To her late husband as King of the Firmament;
 Maximilian, who had dreamed that one day he might stand
 At the top of some broad, magnificent staircase
 And vouchsafe from that height of infinite command
 One smile of infinite condescension and grace
 On the human beings gathered around its base.

*Born July 6, 1832; son of the archduke Franz Carl;
 brother of Franz Joseph I, Emperor of Austria.
 1854, naval administrator; 1857, Viceroy of the
 Lombardo-Venetian Kingdom; 1864, Emperor of
 Mexico.*

Still, for Maximilian, for the man who stands here
 In the midst of his own life—or to be exact,
 Off to one side of his dying—he is nearly
 Obscured by the smoke. Then, as a matter of fact,
 Which of these figures is the man? Possibly this
 Cool-eyed, white shirted one with the curled beard and hair
 (Who might be an advisor). Or perhaps it is
 The middle one, since he's the only one who wears
 A full coat; his face is older, lacks emotion;
 Between the other two men, he holds both their hands.
 But he's too pale; who would go to execution
 Wearing a sombrero? This must be he who stands
 Spread-legged, whose clenched free hand flaps up like a doll
 While his face twists upward in a look that might be
 Taken for great effort or for pain, as the balls
 Break into his chest and, just at this instant, he,
 Whoever he was, is now all finished being.

AUTHOR'S NOTE:—This poem is based on the painting in the Mannheim Museum, as distinguished from the earlier sketch in the Boston Museum which is very different and lacking in the peculiar qualities of detachment and coldness.

HAROLD WITT

Snow Stone

White silence made a secret of the peak,
guarded hard granite with a hush of snow
but soft appearance was as much a work
of adamantine will as that below.

Diamond, the light designs that fell
covered up darkness with a brighter side,
and glittered, moonlit, bluely beautiful—
a jeweled veil that hides an iron bride.

The mists of lace were knitted out of fire
and every satin edge cut sharp as pride;
kisses of ice, cold as a whore's desire,
spat at our lips and cheeks till feeling died.

What could we do though except go on
hacking a path from the cabin down to the road
hoping the saving blade would be able to come
and spray a possible swath through too much cold?

So we endured, and endlessly did descend
from that inclemency to climates of calm,
weathers they claim too civil to offend—
where blizzards only blow on inner stone.

Translations from Rilke

Practicing Piano

The summer hums. In drowsy afternoon
she breathes, confused, the newness of her dress
and plays the étude powerfully as if
impatient for some sign of realness

which might appear tomorrow or tonight,
which even now perhaps is only hidden;
and then before the window's width and height
she suddenly feels the lushness of the park.

Here she stops playing, gazes out and clasps
her hands together, wishing a long book
and all at once she shoves the jasmine back
finding its raging fragrance makes her gasp.

From a Childhood

The darkness was like riches in the room
in which the young boy deeply, secretly, sat.
And when, as in a dream, his mother came
there shivered, far in quietness, a glass.
She felt as if the room were her betrayer
and kissed her boy, whispering Are you here? . . .
Then both glanced at the piano, with a fear,
for in the evenings she would often sing
and he'd be caught up oddly in her song.

He sat quite still. His wide-eyed gaze would hang
upon her hand, heavy with great rings
that moved across the ivory keys as though
moving heavily through drifts of snow.

Leda

When the wanting god was entering the swan
it almost frightened him to find the bird so lovely;
perplexed, he vanished into it, nevertheless,
and wore the feathered fraud of his intention

before the feelings of the untried creature
had yet been tested. The one that he desired
already knew the thing the swan required
and who had come, in such disguise, to clutch her,

which so confused her that she couldn't hide
or fight him any longer. He dropped lower,
as soon as his neck slid through her weakening hand,

and let loose godliness within the loved one.
Then he first felt how plumage fit his power
and in her lap, really became a swan.

Autumn

The falling leaves are falling from a distance
as if they withered in the sky's far garden;
they're falling with a negative insistence.

And in the night the heavy earth is falling
from all the stars in such a loneliness.

We all are falling. This hand is falling too.
And look around. It is the same with all.

And there is one whose hands hold, nevertheless,
these things that fall, with endless gentleness.

W. S. MERWIN

Continuo

What can you do with this
Wind, you can't
Reason with it, entertain it, send
It back, live on it or with it, fold it
Away and forget it, coming at you

All the time perfectly
Empty no face no background,
Before you know it, needing
No doors,
Lighting out of trees, flags, windows of
Fallen buildings, with a noise that could
Run its own trains, what
Can you learn from it

Leaving its shoes all over the place,
Turning day and night into
Back yards
Where it knows the way?

Daybreak

Again this procession of the speechless
Bringing me their words.
The future woke me with its silence.
I join the procession.
An open doorway
Speaks for me
Again.

Vocations

I

Simplicity, if you
Have any time
Where do you spend it?
I tempt you with clear water.
All day I hang out a blue eye.
All night I long to hear your small bell
Of an unknown metal.

II

Seeing how it goes
I can see how it will be:
The color goes but the light stays,
The light stays but we cannot grasp it,
We leave the tree rocking its
Head in its hands
And we go indoors.

III

While the locked doors of the night
Were still sitting in their circle
I recalled the promises of the bridges
And I got up and made my way
To wash my shadow in the river.
In a direction which was lost
The hands of the water have found tomorrow.

WINTHROP PALMER

Granada

When my proud Arab canters into the sky,
Hills shake their olive trees
his silver tassels.

Cold as marble
Old as cedar
Pale as thread
The window is a rose.

For the cathedral
Death wears a spangled wreath
And goes to heaven.

The College

A squad of brick buildings held the slope. The road ran back and forth swinging a red and a green lantern. Up on the knoll, a dark fan of fir trees hid the vacant face of an altered country house.

A mile west, on Hegeman's farm, cabbages twitched an elephant ear, the cauliflower chuckled in their cradles, and a pumpkin in a new leather jacket rolled under shucks of shrivelled corn.

VERNON YOUNG

Films to Confirm the Poets

Drama is neither ritual nor show business, though it may occur in the framework of either one; it is poetry, which is neither a kind of circus nor a kind of church.—Susanne K. Langer: *Feeling & Form*

ELEKTRA, A FILM OF MICHAEL CACOYANNIS, opens with a ricochet of images unsurpassed, in the heroic mode of exposition, since the decade of the Soviet masters. Not a syllable of speech, only brazen sound, a sort of chthonic *musique concrète*—the gods grinding their teeth. Clytemnestra greets the returned Agamemnon outside the hill-top palace of Mycenae, graciously conducts him indoors to his bath and promptly lassos him with a net, the easier for her lover to kill him with a trident. The poetic version closest in spirit, if not in imagery, is that of Robinson Jeffers in *Tower Beyond Tragedy*, where Clytemnestra's recital might have done duty as a preliminary shooting-script (allowing for Cacoyannis having followed the oldest tradition in having Aegisthus do the actual killing—which we don't literally see!):

He came triumphing.

Magnificent, abominable, all in bronze.

I brought him to the bath; my hands undid the armor;

My hands poured out the water;

Dead faces like flies buzzed all about us;

He stripped himself before me, loathsome, unclean, with laughter. . . .

I threw a cloak over him for a net and struck, struck, struck,

Blindly, in the steam of the bath; he bellowed, netted,

And bubbled in the water;

All the stone vault asweat with steam bellowed,

And I undid the net and the beast was dead, and the broad vessel

Stank with his blood.

Cacoyannis is less explicit but he doubly intensifies the passage in his own way, cross-cutting with short, nervously variable shots between the death-struggle in the bath and the scene outside: the guards, the waiting attendants, the stripling Elektra fearfully hugging her small brother, while in her clairvoyant eyes horror contends with foreknowledge. In perhaps fewer than fifty images the prologue is achieved. An anonymous cry is swallowed by the hills and the low-ceiling heavens; Elektra still fiercely hugs the innocent Orestes and a circling hawk reigns over the isolate scene. Then the single word of the title appears on the screen—and the film "begins."

The subsequent killings (of Aegisthus and Clytemnestra) are even

more oblique, in keeping with classical traditions: of Aegisthus' bad end we see only the induction, Orestes' provocation; but the sequel tells all we need to know and makes its own nocturnal pageant: flaming torches in the hills, and Elektra gloating over the body of Aegisthus. Clytemnestra is slaughtered in a hut, with interjected closeups of the shrouded sybils who function as Chorus writhing like outraged Furies: after the unseen deed we watch her supplicating hand relax into lifelessness as she crumples at Elektra's feet. Above everything to Cacoyannis' credit is the equilibrium he maintains—preserving as much of a ritualistic framework as is proper to the classical matrix while availing himself of the kind of poetry film, alone, can give: the irreplaceable feel of the *natural setting* (after all, if the *Oresteia* "took place" anywhere, this was its very landscape, strewn with white boulders and wind-troubled olive trees!) and the sense of *duration*, fatally and abruptly compressed or numbingly prolonged. With the assurance only a modern Greek, perhaps, can afford, Cacoyannis proceeded as if he'd scarcely heard of sanctions imposed by conventions of the amphitheatre or by the clinical glossary of Sigmund Freud. Combining the narrative order of Aeschylus with that of Euripides, he made a film that never for a moment grovels in the dust of statues, never forsakes the dignity of indirection, never fails to convey the drama as at once memorial and actuality. He even brings off the choric feature with no damage to credulity; women of the fields and in the village street stand and cry out from within their individual griefs or group themselves aesthetically, obedient to the crucial subjects of gossip or local misfortune—as in reality they do, today, in southern countries—and in no film save one from Bengal have I seen people move so unaffectedly from speech to sung lamentation. The virtual development of *melos* is exemplified in this film: intonation becoming incantation, drums furnishing the accent, bagpipes (I think) extending the human pitch into eerier realms.

The principal actors carry out Cacoyannis' intentions with natural candor and a consistency of personal bearing, each of them *inside* the variant of his prototype, convinced, you feel, that he's responsible for his own fate, equally convinced that his responsibility is determined, as it is for the others. There's a moment of divination when Orestes (Yannis Fertes), after the murder of Clytemnestra, realizes how far Elektra, herself, has yielded to gratuitous vengeance, how irrevocably far he has followed her. It's only a flicker in the eye but it reveals the crisis of his soul. And as many times as I've heretofore tolerated the conventional stalling of the Recognition Scene, I was for once intimately and deeply stirred—and relieved, as if I had doubted its resolution. Quite the predominant figure is the Elektra of Irene Papas: she is *the* Elektra you'd be bound to expect, handsome and not ingratiating, a wife for no man; inexorably, to all appearance, the Lesbian, consumed from within by a banked-down fire which betrays itself, between outbursts, through the burning eyes and the abundant sultry

mouth. Irene Papas doesn't rest on her native equipment: she feeds it with passionate and sombre nuance.

The close of the film is as deserving of respect, for in the absence from it of a posed finality with trumpets and camera flourish telling you a Great Classic has just passed by, the director's unrelinquished tact is illustrated: his adherence to the plausible spirit and the dour character of his design. It's all over but the haunting; vengeance has been won and remorse follows. Elektra, charred but indestructible, is left to face the sudden hostile winds of community and Orestes is a broken boy who can only turn and walk away over low rocky hills into a blackened sky, not yet inhabited by Furies but with room for them. Faithful Pylades trails behind; then, in a long-shot, Orestes stops and signals him to go back, back to the village to look after Elektra. He walks away again, as the wind rises, and that's how the film ends: just a few lonely creatures scattered unclassically, with a crime between them which had once seemed terribly necessary—and the landscape couldn't care less.

. . . . all the arts lose virtue
Against the essential reality
Of creatures going about their business among the
equally
Earnest elements of nature . . .

—Robinson Jeffers: "Boats in a Fog"

By reason of another species of beauty, that of paradox, we may accept the figure of speech. For only from "the arts," themselves, could a poet have acquired the recognition that "essential reality" is aesthetic! If the real, on its own unedited terms, were simply waiting for a cinematographer to capture it and thereby render superfluous the virtue of art, the history of the newsreel, alone, would be a prodigious anthology of Great Moments. "Creatures going about their business"—automotive freighters on U.S. 66, boats in a fog, pigeons on the grass?—are the nearest-at-hand phenomena for the camera, and the most difficult for a film-maker to transmute so that by contrast all *inventions* (which I presume to be Jeffers' distinction) "lose virtue." There are fewer masterpieces on film of the *real thing* than of the imagined.

Kaneto Shindo's *The Naked Island* is a good example of the simple expedients to which a director will resort to improve his reality and, so doing, fatally miss and not achieve art in its stead. Shindo tried to commemorate the day-by-day existence of a peasant couple, man and wife, stubbornly gleaning their livelihood from what Kipling would have called an Altogether Uninhabited Island. To grow crops in the barren soil they must fetch their water, a few bucketsfull at a time, from another island; hence the principal rhythms of their activity are, for the woman, those of rowing the boat and plodding, always uphill from the water-level, with two buckets strung from a pole across her shoulders; for the man, sowing and watering the rows of seed. Man

and wife converse hardly at all, which puts the burden of expression on the suspense of their slow, silent perpetual motion and on the plastic commerce of the tides, the light and shadow, wind and rain, animal and bird life (almost none). Drama is in the undertow: the heavy monodic rhythm of this elemental round, the gait and the faces of man and woman, the measured footing, the concentration on not spilling the precious water. It's an imbecile life, this, so obdurately to inhabit the lowest level of effort, within eye-shot of a coastal society with manifold strata of conveniences. Yet it has the dignity of choice and will leave its own imprint. So long as Shindo keeps us inside the occupational cadence, its poetic autonomy is unquestionable. He didn't believe in its self-sufficiency, however, for he added a musical motif and no harm would be done if this were barely orchestral, if it mingled with other motifs, came and went like a neap tide or a commuting gull. But he uses the *same* motif, over and over, unvarying, like an emperor's nightingale. Also, impressed by the muteness of his couple, he calls attention to his encouragement of it by permitting, on one occasion, a group conversation to get under way, then throttling down on it. Immediately we're made aware of *acoustics* and of the mixer behind the throne. Again, our fascination with this stoical pair, against all inward questioning of their wisdom, depends absolutely on there being no other world visibly available, as in Luis Bunuel's film of *los hurdos*, *Land Without Bread*. When the boy, in Shindo's film, catches a fish which the family takes to the Big City to sell and therewith celebrate—they "dine out," walk the streets, stare at television in a shop window—the force of their voluntary exile is vitiated: we are in the world of the travelogue, "Japan—Land of Contrasts"!

Using comparable, if richer, basic material, Vittorio De Seta hasn't missed—in three short films and a feature I've seen. This newcomer is stupefyingly the master of his source—the *real*, which he unhesitatingly enhances by all means at his disposal, flexible camera equipment, the color laboratory, dubbed music. And it works out as a form of grandeur, a life-curve effortless yet electrifying. Implicitly, he depends on the survival of work and festivity in anciently founded villages where the traditional unity of work, song and celebration—religious or no—is still intact. There is no schizoid gulf between the living ritual De Seta records or reenacts—in Sicily or Sardinia—and the incredible distinctness with which he dramatizes it. If your Madison Avenue friend, unprepared by French recommendations, emerges from the playhouse where he has seen *Bandits of Orgosolo*, screaming, "But the *hero* is a flock of sheep!", pay no heed except to reprove him for calling an aggregate of sheep a flock, and see the film yourself. I saw it with a band of allegedly jaded Bohemians who so far forgot themselves after this fantastic cycle of victimization and revenge (directed *and* photographed by the single man, De Seta) that they rose to a man (hyperbole) and vehemently clapped their tiny hands. De Seta miraculously urged a

Sardinian shepherd and his small boy to "act out" a crucial pattern of catastrophe and reprise which overtook their normally tranquil occupation and, as if it were as easy as lying, he rekindled a theme deeply reminiscent of the Old Testament—and incidentally mindful of *The Bicycle Thief*. All but occult in his photographing of nature—sheep flowing in forest moonlight like salmon under the surface of a stream; fanged rocks and scant bush-cover exposed to the merciless probe of the wheeling sun—De Seta's only peer is Arne Sucksdorff; if he strikes one as even greater than Sucksdorff it's only because, everything else being equal, man is for most of us a more prejudicial subject than the little foxes, a colony of terns and the booming silence of waterfalls. Bergman screened the film privately for a nucleus of his personnel and report goes that the company just sat staring in wild surmise—silent upon a pique in Solna—with enough power of speech finally to ask each other: "And just what are *we* doing?" Frankly I think they're too close to Bergman to appreciate precisely *what* he is doing at present, but *vis-à-vis* the Swedish film at large, they might well ask! *Bandits of Orgosolo* is one of three superlative films released in 1962 (the others are *Elektra* and Francois Reichenbach's *Un Coeur Gros Comme Ça*) and Vittorio De Seta is the fourth film director of genius to appear in post-war Italy.

The third, Michelangelo Antonioni, has faltered at the summit—we hope not irrecoverably. If I have agreement that *The Eclipse* is the most disappointing film of the last year to come from an eminent director, perhaps the reader will acknowledge that if this film had not followed *L'Avventura* and *La Notte* it would have been impressive. We know too well now what, with his special treatment, Antonioni is doing and how he is doing it. His point of departure—according to a *Film Culture* interviewer, the Lucretian theme, "The only thing certain is the existence of a secret violence that makes everything uncertain"—has been put through its last mutation; in *The Eclipse* Antonioni deprived us of that value of contrast which in the preceding films exalted the haunted surround—the infernal beauty of the Liparian islands, the dream-like space and sound punctuations of Milan registered as freshly as a composition of Bartok or of Chirico and Mondrian, when the world was younger. His foremost artistic error in *The Eclipse* was the casting of Monica Vitti again; although she wasn't playing the same girl (this one is utterly empty and frivolously negative as she begins another "end of the affair"), she *appeared to be* the same girl: same beauty, same "naturalness." The Stock Market as Symbol was over-weighted and, for me, superannuated, because I couldn't help recalling Pudovkin's more terse, sardonic use of the institution in *The End of St. Petersburg* (1928) and its further comic rehearsal in a short film of Hans Richter (1929). Antonioni has perfected a treatment of space and silence; his control of it made it seem the only way of making a film (for want of knowing how to do likewise, Shindo lost a dimension in *The Naked Island*). But *The Eclipse* is less convincingly an encore of the "metaphysical shud-

der" and without that one is left with the cold comfort of intellectually calculated footage—precise as a Bach exercise—and incidentally a point of view, toward socially futile creatures going about no business at all, uncomfortably evangelistic.

Europe belongs to Dante and the witches' sabbath,
not to Newton.—W. B. Yeats

Among currently showing films there's nonetheless no reduction of emotional bounty so drastic as Robert Bresson's *The Trial of Joan of Arc*, a disconcerting failure of imagination that calls into question the principles if not the personality of the director. Robert Bresson is a self-conscious Catholic with an exceptionally austere conception of film-making. While I admire, without exclusively preferring, the art of *multum in parvo*, I have not always been convinced that Bresson's close-reefed sailing is inevitable to the channels he has picked. I suspect the rig may as likely be an exhibition of self-chastisement, like Samuel Beckett forcing himself to write in French to purge his language of ambiguous overtones. Since Beckett is an artist, this doesn't work any better for him than Stendhal's rationale—he once claimed the Napoleonic Code as his prose model. Cinematically, Bresson has achieved something like Stendhal's ambition and proves what a lousy idea it was to begin with. In his desire, perhaps, to avoid both *ritual* and *show business*, Bresson arrives at a reporter's desk in the police court. Or rather, his film suggests a performance at a charity bazaar given by a women's organization in Orleans (if such there be) for sending a deserving girl to a private school. The deserving girl—Florence Carrez—reads the lines of the historical Jeanne D'Arc, disinterred from the Rouen archives. M. Bresson, being a professional film-maker, was engaged to photograph the girl and not much more (we never see a whole building, even!), mostly face-front, slabbed against a wall. For variation he cuts to an inquisitor and includes an "art" shot of an eye looking at Joan in her cell and whispered speculations, in English, about her sex life. At the stake, this Joan is no glorious martyr to her simple faith; she's a French-fried amateur with rather less expression than the woman at the box-office who sold me my ticket. This is not an ordinary failure of movie-making, it's the consequence of driving a principle (neoclassic?) to a standstill. And for Bresson to have supposed he was contributing anything sufficiently vivid to the legend (we can scarcely rest with it as "history" by now) to modify Carl-Theodore Dreyer's film version of 1928 is conceit gone wild. To believe, in any case, that a deep-going traditional subject, protean in its possibilities, can be renewed with no emotional commitment, no decor, no taste of the hour or even of the century, is simply intellectual perversion as willful in its fashion as the narcissism of Roger Vadim and the frantic hay of Jean-Luc Godard.

Who would have thought the old man had so much blood in him? The socialist countries are finding out that the Safe Life (only a blueprint in their scheme, at best) is rarely a diverting subject for narrative art, that one more anti-Nazi film may tempt audiences to ask delicate counterquestions, and that the old-fashioned Capitalist thrill from crimes of passion can't yet be liquidated for the New Poetics. Andrez Wajda, a Polish favorite of liberals, having tried the sex-tease, Paris model, in *The Innocent Sorcerers* and attempted again the persecuted-Jew gambit in *Samson*, has made a movie for Avala Films in Yugoslavia from Nikolai Leskov's long-short-story of 1865, *Lady Macbeth of Mzensk* (or Minsk) which once supplied the libretto for a Shostakovich opera. The film is socially unconstructive, politically indifferent and it caters to the animal in us. It's wonderful. In a provincial Russian village which looks like a medieval cattle compound (a church with minaret is sole spooky relief in the dust-blown monotony of the place), a concupiscent woman waiting for her absent husband, a village V.I.P., takes as her lover an itinerant and irrepressibly insolent farm-hand, Serjosha I'll call him, no better than he should be—except as a lover. When her father-in-law finds them out she poisons the old bastard (in the film, with surprising celerity, by putting candle-meltings in his soup) and with the help of Serjosha she butchers her husband within an hour of his return. They bury him in the pig-pen and briefly enjoy the fruits of their liberty and their fortune. Here there's a magnificent shot of them riding full-tilt through the summer fields, recalling all the Tolstoi you ever read. Nemesis appears in the person of a spinster-faced sister of the dead husband (played by an intelligent actress—they're all Yugoslavs—with hands as musical as a Shankhar dancer's), towing her abominable boy who wants to be cut in on the inheritance. Obviously, this little monster must be dispatched and I'll confess that when the new master of Minsk tries drowning him head-first in a well I was uneasily visited by images from the cartoons of Charles Addams. I might have been able to dismiss the rest of the film, wherein "Lady Macbeth" gnaws on her hand to extirpate the blood-spots and the impudent Serjosha gets the quakes at the wrong moment, but I was spell-bound by Mile Lazarevic as the miscreant lover, by the regal fleshiness of Ljuba Tadic (she would have been an even more potent Clytemnestra than Aleka Catseli), by the authentically gray-waste scenography and by the unfaltering seriousness of Wajda's direction. It's melodrama, of course; no structure of Belief in Necessity gives it the transcendence of an *Elektra*—but it's superb film-making, visually indelible.

At home—i.e. in Poland—Jerzy Kawalerowicz has also repaired to the far distant and the long ago in search of the filmable and produced *Matka Joanna* ("Mother Joan of the Angels") to redeem his feeble entr'acte, *Night Train*. The situation is euphemistically transcribed from the notorious outbreak of fantasy at the convent of Loudun, an

episode that inspired Aldous Huxley's *The Devils of Loudun* and was in part the subject of a Danish film of 1922, *Häxan*. Kawalerowicz is the most sensitively dedicated of the Polish film-makers. During a symposium on "The Human Cinema" (translated for *Polish Perspectives*, Aug.-Sept., 1962), a shatteringly intelligent discussion of aims when compared with this sort of thing in the Advanced Countries, he answered the question, "What is the principal characteristic of our films?" with the statement, "A certain respect for man. Not love, but respect." An honorable admission, and *Matka Joanna*, no less than his *Real End of the War* (1957), confirms the helpless compassion and the analytic temper revealed by it. I had gathered from a review by Boleslav Michalek that this film was too polished (no pun intended) for the full release of its emotional content. This was not my experience: pictorially it was not more formal than the asperity of the setting (an early Gothic cloister in an openview wilderness) would logically dictate. To be sure, Kawalerowicz spends little time on the social periphery—he doesn't "fill in"—working instead close-up to Matka Joanna and her "possession" by the Devil. This exclusiveness tends to concentrate the film with almost theatre intensity on the Prioress herself, her alternating seizures and recantations, and on the dialectic of a priest's struggle with her crisis and his own resulting anxiety. Joanna is played, devastatingly, by Kawalerowicz' wife, Lucyna Winnicka—such acting with the eyes I've not seen excelled, but the more important figure is the Father, irresistibly tempted to assume whatever aberration of body and soul has subverted the woman. He takes his casuistry to a Rabbi (Mieczyslaw Voit plays both men) who snorts in effect "You think you have had experience of the Devil? Let me tell you something on that subject, my friend!" From here to the horrifying denouement the film drives home what I take to be its unutterable thesis, for the veracity of which the Poles are well qualified to vouch: evil cannot be abolished, it can only be transferred.

Now his wars with God begin,
At stroke of midnight God shall win.—W. B. Yeats

*The Communicants*¹ might easily warrant the accusation that at last Ingmar Bergman has confused drama (on film) about the Church with drama as church. The accusation won't come from me. I think *The Communicants* is no end depressing and I can understand that few friends of mine are willing to take the subject as seriously as Bergman: the secondary subject, that is, for the film is plainly about people suffering—to a degree anyone else is at liberty to consider morbid or in the service of something he may feel is in excess of the amount of anxiety engendered. That's as may be. One man's Mede is another man's Persian, as S. J. Perelman has reminded us. I'm not easily harrowed by Bergman these days but I'm ready to call *The Communicants* a master-

¹ Released in the U. S. with the title, *Winter Light*.

piece. Bergman is the only practising director who can make an eloquent film from a rag, a bone and a hank of hair. Bresson can't. Antonioni can't now. Bergman can. Everyone (well, most of the "critics," let's say) thought he had done so with *Through a Glass Darkly*. I stand on my previously forwarded objections, that in the earlier film Bergman failed to distinguish between the necessarily arid and the factitiously tedious, that he went too far outside civilised sensibility and that he evaded his own truths with a highly specious parable. *The Communicants* is the film people thought he then made; there's faultless and almost intolerable harmony here between the major theme—God is silent—and the environment. Within a span or hollow of time little more protracted than the 'running time' of the film, the pastor of an area (you can't call it a community) in north-central Sweden presides over Communion for a congregation of nine, is asked to comfort a man on the brink of suicide with faith he doesn't himself experience, confesses to the woman who loves him that he loves neither her nor anything save his dead wife, listens wearily to plaintively mumbled burdens or to inarticulate fervor with a face of crumbling stone and three slate-gray, graceless hours later begins another service of High Mass with only one auditor—the woman he has tried to cast into outer darkness. "Holy, Holy, Holy," he announces. "God is all Mighty."

Like Conrad's captain in *The Secret Sharer*, Bergman has tested his craft with the ultimate strategy, sailing perilously near to a headland, with only a bobbing hat to assure him of the human trace he has all but repudiated and submerged, full fathom five. The intimate agonies of three or four people fill an hour and a half with a nagging simulation of eternity. Nothing in this exiguous world is more present than the closeup tormented face: the few alternative images remain on the eyeballs and in the tympani like the hallucinations of a man in solitary confinement: a Lubeck altarscape or a Baroque pulpit glimpsed in an otherwise unadorned church; the feverish clamor of a dammed-up river under a pewter sky when the dead man is carted away; a key to the toilet-door in the schoolhouse, absurdly notable, labelled *pojkar* (Boys).

Bergman could lay claim to genius for no other achievement than wringing from Ingrid Thulin such deeply-dredged pain and exaltation. For no one else has she given such a performance, for no other director could she so strip herself of all aids to glamor and drain her poor native capability to find at the bottom these dregs of an uncompromisingly authentic expression. Unprecedented in the history of film, if elephant-memory serves, is the juncture at which she talks in mercilessly held closeup for what seemed to my unclocked sense well over four minutes. In English-language distribution, with subtitles imposed, this may well resemble an animated passport photo; in its pristine form it's excruciating. But by now it's surely not contestable that Bergman knows unerringly how far he can ask any actor to go, how much more he can dig from their already excavated talent. Everyone in this film is better than he

has been under anybody's direction: Gunnar Bjornstrand as the doubting Thomas (when life does terrible things to you, said Dostoevsky, you do terrible things to others); Alan Edwall, the crippled sacristan whose secular apprehension of time convinces him that he suffers more than Christ did on the cross; Frederik Blom as the hired organist who performs a modest miracle of his own by converting the five barley-loaves of his tippling into a perennial repast of facetiousness; Max von Sydow as Jonas (Jonah?), the terrified fisherman drowned by his own irredeemable solemnity, while begging to be told he can walk on the waves. . . . I think I've earned the right to add in conclusion that the film is not without relevance to Bergman's personal case: a pipeline to God, maybe, who doubts his own character as chosen medium, despises those who light his candles and want to believe in his infallibility, and may be left at the last murmuring the ancient texts with a single abused believer for all audience.

JOHN SIMON

Theatre Chronicle

It took *Mother Courage and Her Children* a quarter of a century to get to the New York stage, and it will take at least that long for the bad taste this production left in our mouths to be rinsed away. The strange thing is that everyone concerned wanted to make the Broadway production as Brechtian as can be—except for little compromises which everyone also felt impelled to make. Thus *Mother Courage* manages to fall solidly between two chairs and be neither good Brecht nor good Broadway theatre.

Blame attaches to every aspect of this production. Eric Bentley, the translator, has devoted himself to Brecht to the point where he combs his hair *à la* Brecht, dresses Brechtianly, and behaves with Brecht-like waspishness. By all means let Brecht be God and Bentley his prophet—only what comes out in English? To begin with, Bentley is quite unable to catch the racy folksiness of the German, and his occasional use of slang merely emphasizes the middle-class colorlessness of his basic language. Next, he has cut (or been obliged to cut) about one sixth or seventh of the play, leaving hardly a longer speech undecimated. From such a key statement, for instance, as the Chaplain's in Scene 6 about the harmlessness of war, the magnificently ironic basic utterance "Der Krieg befriedigt nämlich alle Bedürfnis, auch die friedlichen darunter"

is missing, along with several juicy details. The big social-political speeches in Scenes 3 and 6 are cut to the bone, and the mixture of cynicism, opportunism, bitter common sense, and, on the other hand, hero worship and folly, which the scenes contain, becomes unobtrusive and unconvincing. Bentley presumes, however, to smuggle in little inventions of his own. In Scene 1, Courage, showing her papers, says, "Here's a Bible—picked it up somewhere to wrap my cucumbers in," which is taking us, humoristically, back to Methuselah; but there are even more banal interpolations, as when the Chaplain is made to remark, "War is like love."

Worst, however, are Bentley's mistranslations. Often he misses jokes. Thus "Und hat das Maul nicht aufgemacht, ausser wenn er gegessen hat. Und dann muss er," says the Chaplain to prove that Swiss Cheese was silent; but Bentley translates "never once opened his mouth except to eat, which is necessary," where the "necessary" now refers to eating instead of to opening his mouth. It should have been something like "never once opened his trap except to eat. And then he's got to." Again, explaining the Cook's nickname, Peter Piper, Yvette says "weil er die Pfeif nicht aus dem Maul genommen hat dabei," yet Bentley translates this highly sexual *dabei* with a noncommittal "the whole time" which the audience managed beautifully to misunderstand. Still more serious are the downright mistranslations. Thus Courage's ironic comments in Scene 8 on her one man "wo solid war" become pointless because Bentley translates *solid* as "sound" instead of as "respectable." Or again, the Chaplain's warning not to treat peace as an "altes, verrotztes Sacktuch" (a filthy, old snotrag) loses all its meaningful brutality in Bentley's cozily familiar "snotty old hanky."

To have picked Jerome Robbins, an able choreographer and clever but chichi musical-comedy director, to stage *Mother Courage* was a curious whim. Robbins, with gingerly care, attempted to turn this into a near-Brechtian production. But all he achieved is self-consciousness in the performers, amateurish clichés in the stage movement, and a sense of emptiness rather than spiritual aridity. One had the funereal feeling of watching the show through its own semitransparent ceremonies. The few times Robbins dared invent something, it was foolish. Thus he had the Swedish commander in Scene 2 pretend to offer the Chaplain some wine, only to splash it over the fellow's robes and hand, dying it blood-red—a piece of sensationalism quite out of key with the requisite cynicism. Even Kattrin's death scene is impaired: she is not allowed to show sufficient concern for her mother, the wagon, and her own safety, but must drum away with almost unrelieved heroism. When she is shot, the few last drum strokes—a real *coup de théâtre*—are jettisoned in favor of immediate collapse and death.

But it is the casting and acting of the play that must be reckoned the weakest link in this brittle chain. Only the Angel of Perversity, or Broadway, could have chosen Anne Bancroft to play Courage, the arche-

typal peasant turned small businesswoman. Miss Bancroft, who grew up in the Bronx and prepared for this part by studying the peddlers of the lower East Side, makes the canteen woman a smart-aleck, slightly snappish, city proletarian. That her Bronx-Brooklyn speech and mannerisms effectively preclude her being a seventeenth-century Bavarian peasant is bad enough, but that she is young, lightweight, and tries very hard not to play realistically (in accordance with "epic theatre") and as a result gives only a promising high-school performance, is a more serious matter. Graver yet is that she is totally incapable of summoning up a kind of basic humanity, that she cannot weld cunning, pigheadedness, greed, obtuseness, primeval femininity, occasional grudging sentiment, and ultimate preposterousness into the figure of a more-than-life-size pigmy, an eponymous worm, a creature hovering between pathos and absurdity, enduring in her fierce triviality. Worst of all, Miss Bancroft and Mr. Robbins contrive to make Courage indomitable. She ought to be merely dogged. Yet dismal as Miss Bancroft's fiasco is, it is not just one person's inadequacy. It is the failure of the whole American theatre system and stage life to produce an actress of such thoroughgoing humanity and roundedness as Therese Giehse or Helene Weigel, the two great German interpreters of *Mother Courage*.

The other performances were no better: a typically American wise-guy of a Cook, a sly young jokester of a Chaplain, an Yvette laden with the commonplaces of cabaret theatre, and so on. Only Zohra Lampert's Kattrín was a respectable, indeed a solid, performance, though she unfortunately conceives of muteness as verging on feeble-mindedness.

Ming Cho Lee's settings missed the mark by retaining a slightly Oriental elegance in the midst of dilapidation and squalor. Thus the main piece of décor is a kind of orangey cyclorama forming four fifths of the horizon. On it are painted faint ghosts of horizontal clouds, and it is propped up by slender ascending ribs which are cleverly—too cleverly—not quite parallel. Between scenes, this entire large canvas was covered with slide projections showing the disasters of World War II, retreating armies or harried lines of refugees, and serving merely to clutter up the stage with giant tautologies.

The music also suffered. The Soldier's Song in Scene 6 was left out, as was the Chaplain's in Scene 3; of the Solomon Song only one half (not including Solomon!) remained. The Lullaby in Scene 12 was omitted at one performance I attended, and reinstated at another but without orchestral accompaniment, thus making that scene more heart-rending, the very thing against which Brecht repeatedly warned. And there were quite a few times when the orchestrations sounded more like Richard Rodgers than Paul Dessau. Even when a song was all there, as the one about the pleasures of settledness which is supposed to come as a terrible taunt to the ragged, hungry, homeless Courage and Kattrín, who hear it as they pass a prosperous farmhouse, it was

made to issue, instead, from a speaker system, as if a juke box were providing a pause that refreshes.

The reviews of *Mother Courage* ranged from the hypocritically respectful to the enthusiastically asinine. The main audience reaction is vapid laughter, shocked ts-ktsking, and dutiful but unconvinced applause. Unless Anne Bancroft's Hollywood-sent Oscar keeps the play running, it stands a good chance of a short unhappy life. And, with heavy heart, Brecht-lovers will have to speed it along to oblivion.

It is amazing what a good production and fine translation can do even for a play which is securely accepted as a masterpiece. For all the respect and admiration we might have had for *Six Characters in Search of an Author*, it takes a rare production such as the one now at the small, semicircular Martinique Theatre to make us relish the play with spontaneous joy. What William Ball, the director, and Paul Avila Mayer, the translator, have done is to rescue a classic from sinking ever deeper into its own classicism—without resorting, however, to that vulgar and obfuscating horseplay with which Tyrone Guthrie studded his revival at the Phoenix. Suddenly Pirandello stands before us as the peer of any great nineteenth- or twentieth-century playwright, the worthy heir of Shakespeare.

We realize now that *Six Characters* is not only a brilliant examination of the insoluble problem of illusion and reality, but also a humane study of compassion and indifference; a thorough analysis of the relation of the author to his work, of the created character to the public, to posterity, and to his playwright—which last, by extension, may also be the relationship of man to God; and, finally, a magnificent imaging of the theatre: its magic, callousness, and disturbing dual citizenship in fact and dream, which may, after all, be the greater fact.

All this is brought out beautifully by William Ball's direction—by its boundless inventiveness and energy, its ceaselessly flowing pictorial suggestiveness. As the audience sits in the theatre, things begin to happen quite imperceptibly. Technicians and actors seem to be preparing their work on a brightly lit stage; they murmur words semi-audibly and move about casually. This cannot be the play. When the Director enjoins us to watch a rehearsal quietly, we are persuaded that nothing more than just that is happening. Suddenly, the lights go out, as though a fuse had blown, there is protestation and cursing, then one light goes on again. There, dressed in black, undulating in eerie unison, in an uncanny, penumbral, as it were underwater lighting, is an at first indeterminate number of presences compressed into a kind of living cube—rather like some deep-sea fish pressing hungrily against the glass of their aquarium.

I cannot dwell in detail on the extraordinarily imaginative manner in which Ball has staged the tantalizing interaction of these six very alive fictions with the far more inchoate but supposedly real Actors and

Director—as real, that is, as you and I, however real that may be. Never is this production allowed to bog down; things are continually happening: on the stage, along the sidelines of it, in the audience, around and behind the spectators, sometimes just audibly in the corridors outside. And however much our attention may be engaged in several places at the same time, whatever is confusing is confusing the way the dramatist intended it, the way life is when it is lived by us, or, perhaps, when we are being lived by it.

Ball's great achievement is that he has found movements and actions to go with every bit of what in other productions of the play is merely exposition or philosophizing or recrimination, so that what might have looked like opera without music becomes an intellectually disturbing, emotionally tugging three-ring circus in which the funny, the frightening, and the unbearably sad are enacted simultaneously to our delight and awe. When, in the last scene, the Director leaves the stage, he brushes, deeply shaken, against the only remaining source of light: a bridge of spots that is left swaying anxiously to and fro on the empty stage—an objective correlative for all of our minds wrenched from their conventional assumptions.

Ball's direction and Mayer's translation, abetted by Jules Fisher's almost dialectically penetrating lighting, make this a major occasion in the theatre, even though the acting is generally only adequate; with very interesting work contributed, however, by Michael O'Sullivan as the Director and Richard A. Dysart as the Father.

And what did another revival, this one by the celebrated—or is it legendary?—Actors' Studio in its first public appearance since its formative days, bring to light? The play was Eugene O'Neill's *Strange Interlude*, revived by an all-star cast and directed by José Quintero, the entire production meant to testify to the contribution the Studio, Lee Strasberg, and the "method" have made to the American theatre. On the evidence of this production, it is nothing more or less than setting it back a good thirty years.

In his early plays, O'Neill wrote sympathetically and straightforwardly about the life in the merchant marine which he knew. In his last plays, when his intellectually shaping and linguistically life-giving faculties had finally matured, he wrote two or three incisive, many-sided, fully fleshed plays whose humanity will not wither with years. But in between he turned out some of the worst plays ever concocted by a major talent, plays based on imperfectly digested European influences meant clearly *pour épater les bourgeois*, not the least impressionable bourgeois being O'Neill himself. To dig up one of the most turgid and turbid plays of this middle period, *Strange Interlude*, a nine-act, five-hour megatherium, even more edentate in its present fossilized form, to conceive of it with bloody literal-mindedness and direct it with pious stodginess, is in itself a disaster. To populate it with a nebula of Actors' Studio luminaries—Geraldine Page, Ben Gazzara, Pat Hingle,

Jane Fonda, Geoffrey Horne—and a few other “names” drawn into the Studio orbit—Franchot Tone, Betty Field, William Prince—has turned it into a carnival of egomaniacal circus horses each pulling in its own direction. Everybody is playing his trademark: Miss Page is back there summer-and-smoking it up, Gazzara is still wallowing on a hot tin roof, Hingle is still spreading around some left-over Inge and Mac-Leish. Granted that if they were playing what O'Neill wrote things would scarcely be improved, this much is certain: *Strange Interlude* remains a dreadful cross between uncomprehended Freud and unfunny Coward; and the Actors' Studio cannot even foster the minimum requirement for such a group: homogeneous ensemble acting.

Another all-star revival, Shaw's *Too True to be Good*, demonstrates, if nothing much else, that famous actors assembled from all over can prove in juxtaposition just as heterogeneous as the nurselings of the “method,” but not quite so boring. Though the production is less arid than *Strange Interlude*, it is one more case of formulaic thinking: the assumption that stars plus any old Shaw equals box-office magic (**+GBS=\$\$\$). So Albert Marre has taken an undistinguished and preachy piece of late Shaw and cut out most of the preachment, leaving us the full lack of distinction. On the other left hand, he has added up-dated gags and costumes, lukewarm incidental music, and a filmed cartoon sequence, and he has directed the living actors so as to deviate as little as possible from the cartoons.

Yet a few of the actors, Cyril Ritchard, Glynis Johns, and David Wayne, manage nicely enough. Ray Middleton squeezes through, but Robert Preston and Eileen Heckart fall victims to the linguistic *dépaysement*, and Lillian Gish has, as usual, all the properties of cough syrup except the therapeutic one. Poor Cedric Hardwicke has become a creature of his dentist and sounds totally indentured. Judging from the daily reviews and the audience reaction, the middlebrows have reached the stage where they consider Shaw's sometimes eccentric, sometimes eclectic pontifications deliciously daring, profound, and prophetic. If so, Michael Langham is perhaps right, and we may be in for a Shavian deluge. But ideas which yesterday were deliberately provocative and ahead of their time, and whose interest lay mainly in whether or not they would come true, today seem, in either case, boring. Especially so when there is not much of a work of art underlying them.

After three revivals, a trio of light comedies. There is Peter Ustinov's *Photo Finish*, which, if one could see it through the wrong side of the telescope, might make an acceptable ten-minute bauble, but blown up into a three-act play it is only a large bladderful of blather. It bursts sooner or later, according to how much tolerance one has for exchanges like “He works for the Government of Southern Australia, refusing immigrants.—Well, if he refuses them, he probably accepts some of them.—Oh no, they've got another man for that.” Even this may be a little racier than most of the wit, which is on the level of

"He's the kind of person who'd take blondes dancing vertically at first, horizontally later"; or "You used to grunt and groan in my arms like a small warthog."

What passes for the idea here is to confront a novelist of eighty with his earlier selves, aged sixty, forty, and twenty, respectively, as well as with his long-dead father (which allows for further witticisms on the order of "You have no right to forbid me anything; you may be my father, but I am older than you are!") and to make the present and its past, and the past and its future intermingle like a garbled lesson in conjugations. "Writing," says the protagonist's octogenarian self, "is not difficult. It's thought, and protecting that thought against wit and ornament." Mr. Ustinov, who, despite the wanness of his jokes, is only forty-two, has not yet made this discovery of his future self. As for now, he is still protecting his wit and ornament against thought, and at this, I must confess, he is quite successful. Which would be all right if the wit were worth protecting against anything at all, but facile ironies like "She's an old lady, and her beastliness has real sweep and majesty to it" might just as well be left to drown in the martinis that must have be-gotten them.

Ustinov's main concern is clearly not art but economics: how to make his single self go farthest. Time was when he could write, direct, and act in a play whose principals were four colonels, only one of whom he could portray. Now, however, he has perfected his technique, and, besides writing, directing, and starring, gives us four principals who are all aspects of the same vaguely autobiographical self. It is to be hoped that, ultimately, he will achieve a form of mitosis enabling him to play all the parts himself. For the time being, though, Ustinov has to put up with such other actors as Dennis King and Paul Rogers who summarily outdo his own rather hammy performance.

Both *Enter Laughing* and *Dear Me, the Sky is Falling* are comedies based on the ascendancy of one supposedly riotously funny character. In *Enter Laughing*, it is a nice little Jewish young man who decides to become an actor instead of working in a shop, and who triumphs finally over all odds, including his own complete lack of talent. In *Dear Me*, it is a sweet, middle-aged Jewish mother who decides she will not run everybody else's life (after having made a total mess of things thereby), goes to a psychiatrist, learns to lay off interfering—until the various members of her family end up asking her to manipulate them and proceeding to do on their own what the beloved autocrat used to coerce them into. And everything settles down again into pristine prosaicism. The only thing that recommends *Enter Laughing* is the very special comic talent of Alan Arkin, who possesses what I can describe only oxymoronically as a charming stolidity, a dogged grace, a volubly brooding, seductive schlemihlhood that makes his corner of *Enter Laughing* jocund and bright indeed. As for Gertrude Berg, who is co-author and star of *Dear Me*, her self-satisfaction assumes such heroic

proportions that it actually borders on adequacy. The real acting in the play—as much as a performance in an obviously contrived work can ever be real acting—is that of the always excellent William Daniels, and a noteworthy newcomer, Ron Leibman. But the true interest of this three-act contraption lies in the fact that—O temerity!—it dares pit two of America's most sacred cows, Mom and the Psychoanalyst, against each other. Needless to say, the bout ends in an honorable draw, satisfying to both parties, and permitting the audience to have a good laugh at its idols while cherishing the feeling that this laughter itself is a kind of incense.

One thing, at least, becomes more and more clear: how right Kenneth Tynan is in his contention that if you took the Jews away from the Broadway scene, there would be no comedy left. I know, I know, but I am not resigned. There must be other sources of merriment besides the eternal ambitious mothers who want their sons to be respectable professional men, their daughters married to doctors or lawyers, and all members of their family eating heartily. Jokes must be derivable from other subjects besides harried fathers, lovably bossed by their wives and dreaming of homes in Florida and holes-in-one, who feebly side up with their children and comically sink in the quicksands of "the Business." But most of all I am sick unto death of the ugliness of Jewish speech: of its clichés, its barbarisms, its whining inflections. And of the gratuitous collusion that engulfs the playhouses in which these shows are on view: the confidence on both sides of the footlights that because two such vacuous mirrors as the commercial theatre and the commercial audience can repeat any paltry object caught between them unto infinity, the nugacity and dreariness of that object are somehow remitted, and the object itself ennobled to the point of deserving its pestilential permanence. It is entirely probable that if what I am showered with were to be plays about Welshmen, Yorkshiremen, Sicilians, or Patagonians, my reactions would be no less vehement; but *this* is what I am drowning in, and while even one corner of my mouth remains above it, I shall intone my protest against *this*.

So it is that praise must be given Murray Schisgal for his two short plays, *The Typists* and *The Tiger*, even though the first of these does not come off at all, and the second weakens as it goes along. But Mr. Schisgal has made the decent attempt to explore the platitudes and idiosyncrasies that underlie the business of living, irrespective of clique or clan. He has found the commonplaces that are common to all, and the quirks that can crop up anywhere just as easily as somewhere.

In *The Tiger*, he examines a frustrated would-be intellectual who turns into an unsuccessful rapist ("I want you, Mrs. Peyton, now, here, on the floor!") only to be seduced by his intended victim. This battle of wits between a Schopenhauerian rape-killer-to-be and his tied-up prey who, though against being killed, is more than ready for adultery, has a deal of addlepatented charm ("If you had to choose between a mil-

lion dollars and losing your leg, which would you choose?—Right leg or left leg?”) and whimsical social criticism (“What’s going to happen when this population explosion really gets going? Three million people waiting at the bus stop; you won’t be able to use umbrellas any more.”) but unfortunately ends with a tumble into bed and bedroom farce.

The Typists attempts to compress into a single office day the substance or shadowiness of two people’s entire, prototypical lives. Though the idea is fetching, it fails. Mr. Schisgal is trying to cross a wintry lake by jumping from one floating, frozen truism to another, which could be amusing if the leaps were more acrobatic, and effective if the truisms were not lingered on long enough to melt underneath him. Still, there is an estimable talent at work in these plays, and Eli Wallach and Anne Jackson conduct this brace of duologues with proper animation and animality.

Animation becomes animus at *The Establishment*, where some fine imported satire, woven in Great Britain, can be sampled. A quintet of dyed-in-the-wool radicals, ranging in age from a precocious twenty-two to a still undoddering thirty-three, make equally eldritch fun of creaky eld and crippled youth. A still younger but scarcely less professional version of *Beyond the Fringe*, these youthful Davids swing their slingshots with a vengeance, though what they sling at the objects of their displeasure, whose numbers are legion, is not exactly *shot*, although it does sound somewhat like it.

In their milder mood, they have a bishop telling a man in the death-house, “Now there may not be a God, or there may be. Personally, I believe in God—I make my living off it.” And when the condemned rapist and murderer inquires, “How is masturbation in the eye of the Lord?” the bishop replies, “Well, it’s rather difficult.” But things get bloodier when the Foreign Secretary informs his B.B.C. interviewer that, despite France, Britain’s chances of joining the Common Market are not bad: “The other five nations are very fond of our case. We are pinning our hopes on Luxemburg.” In another extraordinary skit, Macmillan and his top aides discover to their consternation that Lord Home is a homosexual, and he presently enters enacted by Eleanor Bron *en travesti*. In still another number, two cockneys crucified on lower crosses envy the complacently Oxonian-sounding crucified one on the higher cross in the middle. It turns out that the supernal powers are guilty of nepotism.

And so it goes. Not always in the best of tastes—especially during some filmed sequences—but always pointedly, intelligently, freshly. To be sure, Carole Simpson sings some logy songs by Christopher Logue with music by Tony Kinsey and Stanley Myers, which go Mendelssohn one better by being, for all practical purposes, without words *and* music. Except for Miss Simpson, the performers seemed to me outstanding, with special laud due the tommy-gun-concealing tomboy-

ishness of Eleanor Bron, and the slings and arrows of the outrageous John Fortune.

Of the two musicals I can report on, the off-Broadway *Riverwind* is vastly preferable. True, there are rhymes like "crickets" and "apricots," and couplets like "If I have another chance to wed, / Could I ever love another man after Fred?" Yet the music and lyrics of John Jennings have a nicely unassuming gusto, and Joseph Benjamin's book (based on a story by Mr. Jennings), though derivative and inconsequential, has a good deal of verve and a kind of prelapsarian jollity. It is all about recognizable human beings, it is simple but not without slyness, and it says something—something small and in a small voice, but perfectly audible and well worth hearing. If Robert Frost had ever written a musical comedy, *Riverwind* might very likely have been it. Several of the performances are remarkable, the others bearable; and the production is as polished and accomplished as is consonant with limited means but considerable taste. Particularly skillful are Abba Bogin's musical arrangements and the incandescent musical staging variously attributed to Phil Landi and Ronald Field.

As for *Tovarich*, it's a large show; as large and frozen and barren as Siberia, to which its authors deserve to be banished. David Shaw's book manages to dilute Jacques Deval's original (which, I admit, is an achievement of sorts); Lee Pockriss's score resembles music only when it resembles somebody else's, and then it certainly resembles; Anne Crosswell's lyrics are a trifle better, or, more exactly, better trifles; Herbert Ross's dances are in this gifted but erratic choreographer's erratic manner—though here and there a touch of the gifted Ross does rear its toes; Peter Glenville supplies his customary slick and soulless direction; and whereas Rolf Gerard's settings alternate between the routine and the resourceful, the usually excellent Motley costumes are, in this show, steadily mediocre.

And the performances? Well, both Jean Pierre Aumont and Vivien Leigh have an undeniable *savoir faire* and some of that dubious appeal which, with a lump in my throat, I shall call glamor; and for the benefit of those impressed by such things, I can declare both stars extremely well preserved, and, in fact, rather too young for their parts. Miss Leigh, indeed, is still in full possession of that kittenishness with which she so magisterially mucked up Shakespeare's Cleopatra a dozen years ago, and which so ill befits the Grand Duchess Tatiana's personality and the diva's age. But when she does a charleston—a quite ordinary charleston, mind you—she brings the house down, as though the Pope were condescending to make a personal appearance at the Broadway Theatre singing "Home on the Range." For the rest, such able performers as Louise Kirtland, Alexander Scourby, and George S. Irving are wasted on spineless parts; and there are two juveniles, Byron Mitchell and Margery Gray, who perform their absolutely distasteful material as though they were convinced they could make it worse. And, by God, they are right.

B. H. HAGGIN

Music and Ballet Chronicle

EUGENE BERMAN'S SCENERY AND COSTUMES for the ballets *Concerto Barocco* and *Romeo and Juliet* and for the Metropolitan's *Rigoletto*, *The Barber of Seville* and *Don Giovanni* have had a beauty, an effectiveness in relation to the proceedings on the stage, and a distinction such as we used to see in the work of Robert Edmond Jones and do not see in even the best work of the designers of today. The *Don Giovanni*, he announced at the time, was his last work for the stage; but he was persuaded to design this year's new production of *Otello*, a work whose time and place make it suited to his idiosyncratic style in architectural forms and color. And while the results this time were not the marvel he achieved for *Don Giovanni*, he provided a series of sets, characteristic in their somber richness, which, except for a too cluttered second-act backdrop, were excitingly beautiful and effective—one newly thought-out and effective detail being the semi-transparent back wall of the fourth-act bedroom, behind which one saw Otello's silhouetted figure moving toward the door. He also provided a series of costumes for Otello which, except for the striped-awning-like one of the second act, were superbly contrived in their varied splendor; a series of costumes for Desdemona and single costumes for the other principals, carefully and beautifully thought out in their variety and harmony of color; and costumes for the chorus in a profusion of color, against which the principals stood out brilliantly.

Otello's first-act costume heightened the impressiveness of James McCracken's enormous body, which combined with the vocal power of his "*Esultate!*" to make Otello's entrance the tremendous thing it should be. But this was the last thing of its kind: thereafter McCracken had neither the projective force in his acting nor the sheer power in his singing that the role called for—though the voice was an agreeable one that worked well in the lyrical first-act duet, and the impersonation was believable and effective. Gabriella Tucci's Desdemona also was believable; and after the tremulous and edged singing I had heard her do in *Don Giovanni* I was agreeably surprised by the steady and lovely voice that she used with expressive eloquence and musical good taste. Another surprise was the restraint in both acting and singing that produced Robert Merrill's quietly sinister Iago. But no surprise at all was Paul Franke's excellent Cassio. As for Solti, he had the performance well in hand, but did not keep it moving with the continuity of impetus, flow and tension that gives Toscanini's recorded performance its overwhelming impact; and sitting on the left side of the Grand Tier I heard poorly balanced tutti in which the brass blared out raucously.

In the Metropolitan performance of Bellini's *La Sonnambula* that I heard, Joan Sutherland did much the same singing as in the American Opera Society's concert performance the year before—which is to say that she produced in the early scenes, in which Amina sings of her happiness and joy, the extremely mannered moaning that was excessive even in "*Ah, non credea mirarti*," in which she sings of her unhappiness and grief. And this excess was exceeded in her performance of "*Ah, non credea*" in a Bell Telephone telecast some months earlier. But in between these two performances there was a concert in suburban Englewood, New Jersey, at which she excited the audience not only with her brilliant coloratura singing but with the unmannered delivery of cantilena that gave shape and tension and style to the emerging phrase. If this was what she considered right for simple suburbanites, someone should tell her it is right also for sophisticated city folk.

The Concert Opera Association's performance of Rossini's *William Tell*, thirty years after the last performance at the Metropolitan, gave many in the audience, who knew Rossini only as a master of comedy, their first opportunity to hear what accomplished and affecting serious writing he was capable of—notably in the second act, beginning with Mathilde's "*Selva opaca*," about which Berlioz exclaimed, "This is poetry, this is music, this is art—beautiful, noble, pure, just as its votaries would have it always," and after which "marvel follows marvel." Unfortunately a number of things in the performance prevented complete appreciation, and even accurate hearing, of the music. The Association's conductor, Thomas Scherman, has contended that concert performance of opera "provides a near-ideal forum for comprehension of a work's text and essential musical construction minus the usual distractions" of stage performance; and it is true that with a straight concert performance such as Toscanini gave of *Otello* attention is concentrated entirely on the music. However the music was intended to be heard with a stage performance; and actually the imaginative scenery and costumes and effective acting of the new Metropolitan *Otello* are not distractions which interfere with one's experience of the music, but are rather contexts in which music's expressive significance is more explicit. Actually, moreover, the Concert Opera Association and American Opera Society don't offer straight concert performances; they offer what they attempt to make something more than concert performances with entrances and exits and acting by the singers. And it is these performances that distract one with what—illusive and undistracting when done with costumes and scenery—is incongruous and occasionally absurd when done by singers in present-day evening clothes on a bare stage. Thus the *Tell* performance provoked laughter at what should have been serious moments—when Gessler reached up to an imaginary tree and plucked an imaginary apple (for Tell to shoot at with an imaginary bow and arrow), and again when an upholstered bench collapsed under the fainting Tell's weight. Moreover, Carl Olsen, who sang Ar-

nold, was a last-minute replacement who hadn't been able to memorize his part—one consequence being the absurdity of the pumping dramatic gestures he kept making with his left arm while his eyes were fixed on the text in his right hand. But there was a further consequence: Olsen had a tenor voice of excellent quality and the necessary high range, which, in the fourth-act aria that he was allowed to sing from the music on a stand before him, he used with assurance and effectiveness; but at other times, with his mind partly on the "acting" he had to do, his singing was a cliff-hanging operation. Mary Judd, also a replacement, was more secure and sang Mathilde quite well. But the singing of Giuseppe Taddei, the Tell, had the impressive authority and force that came from his many performances of the role. The other soloists were acceptable; William Johnson's Choral Art Society was excellent; the orchestra may have played better than it sounded in Philharmonic Hall; and Scherman did a better-than-usual job of co-ordination and pacing.

I didn't hear Van Cliburn's performance of Mozart's Concerto K.503 with the New York Philharmonic in 1959, in which Messrs. Lang, Schonberg and Sargeant found the musical inadequacies of one who had continued to devote to Tchaikovsky and Rachmaninov the time in which he should have been learning how to play Mozart. But I was certain that the musical taste I had heard operating in the performance of the Tchaikovsky and Rachmaninov concertos had operated in the Mozart, and that the reviewers had heard the confirmation of their predictions they had wanted to hear, instead of what Cliburn had actually done. My belief was confirmed at the time by the report of a member of the Philadelphia Orchestra about Cliburn's beautiful playing in the Mozart concerto when he had rehearsed it earlier with that orchestra for his own pleasure. And it was confirmed recently by what I heard when Cliburn played it in April with the Symphony of the Air under Wallenstein. The piano's very first reply to the orchestra exhibited a perfection of enunciation of musical phrase that continued to be heard in the piano's every statement thereafter; and one was moved not only by the extraordinary musical powers that one heard operating in this realization of the work, but by the way they were being exercised—the simple directness of their application to the task by this quietly, raptly concentrated youngster as though he were only—to borrow Stravinsky's phrase—the vessel through which Mozart's concerto was passing. And the risks he took in playing so unspectacular a work in so unspectacular a manner were demonstrated by the statement of a minor *New York Times* know-nothing that "his Mozart was so tame and relatively uninteresting that one wondered what had become of the great talent." In addition the concert offered well-conceived and beautifully executed performances of Mozart's G-minor Symphony and the Symphony K.297 (*Paris*), the first conducted by Wallenstein, the second by Roberto LaMarchina.

Musical perfection was heard at an earlier concert in Szymon Goldberg's performance of Mozart's Concerto K.219 with his Netherlands Chamber Orchestra and their performances of Bach's Brandenburg Concertos Nos. 3 and 4.

I mentioned last time that Stravinsky's *Le Baiser de la Fée* is not what Winthrop Sargeant hears—a Stravinsky orchestration of music that is his imitation of the style of Tchaikovsky; and that it is instead, from first to last, an operation of the Stravinsky mind, which not only elaborates and transforms the Tchaikovsky fragments it uses, but fits these transformed elements into contexts of writing of its own imagining. I speak of this now because Balanchine's *Bugaku*, the first of the New York City Ballet's new works last spring, is a similar operation of the Balanchine mind, which—out of what it has seen of female figures in Japanese paintings and male dancers in the performances of the Gagaku company—has created its own Japanese-style movements of female and male dancers that flow into and out of Balanchine-style ballet movements. Like any other procedure, this one justifies itself or not by the way it works in the object presented to eye or ear; and in *Bugaku* it works as impressively as in *Le Baiser de la Fée*. Indeed the impressiveness is, in the end, that of an extraordinary tour de force: except for a single moment of animation that interrupts the climactic adagio of the boy and girl, the music of Toshiro Mayuzumi whines, drones, pounds and blares its way in slow tempo for a half-hour; and it is an extraordinary tour de force to have created movements—the slow assuming of exquisite Japanese-style configurations by the girl and her companions, the vigorous Japanese-style movements of the boy and his companions, the adagio of the five couples, leading to the adagio of the boy and girl alone—which, as they succeed each other in that half-hour of slow tempo, hold the eye without a break in their fascination and tension.

In this they are helped by the way they are executed. As always, Balanchine's imagination has operated in terms related to the particular capacities and styles of his dancers. With Allegra Kent it is the capacity for exquisite delicacy in bodily configuration and movement—to say nothing of the mere physical strength behind this, which in *Bugaku* makes possible the slow-motion execution of the delicate configurations and movements with unbroken continuity. With Edward Villella it is the virtuoso powers exercised with an elegance and grace that are personal as well as physical, and with a force of mere presence that becomes tremendous in the climactic adagio—another in the style of those of *Agon* and *Episodes*, in which the boy doesn't merely support the freely moving girl in her spins and arabesques, but instead closely holds and controls and manipulates her body in extraordinary configurations and involvements with his own. (Mimi Paul, in one of the performances, achieved a sufficient approximation of Kent's delicacy; but the Arthur

Mitchell personality and style didn't work well in the boy's part: one image that remains in my memory is that of Mitchell stepping with a fussiness that was almost dainty, as against the simplicity and strength of Villella's movements.)

The title of Balanchine's other new work, *Movements for Piano and Orchestra*, is that of the recent Stravinsky piece to which it is danced. The music of the six brief sections presents what my ears hear as successions of fragments of sound—tonally unrelated, and without coherent expressive meaning—like those of the Webern music Balanchine used in *Episodes*; and his settings of them are new and powerful elaborations of the distorted, angular and jerky style he used with that music. Six girls provide contexts for the entanglements in which Jacques d'Amboise manipulates the body of Suzanne Farrell, a girl taken from the corps this season, who in a succession of solo parts—in *Concerto Barocco*, *Liebesliederwalzer*, the new *Arcade* of John Taras, and finally *Movements*—exhibited an increasingly impressive style and technical power.

Taras' *Arcade*, to Stravinsky's Concerto for Piano and Wind Instruments, is a skillful use of the Balanchine idiom which gives Farrell and Mitchell material for brilliant performances.

As important as Balanchine's new contributions to the repertory was the restoration of two of his greatest works of the past, *Concerto Barocco* and *The Four Temperaments*. "Before," he said a few weeks before the season, "I could not give *Concerto Barocco* because I never could be sure of having the eight girls: always two would be missing and I had no replacements. Now we have *three* groups of eight girls! We have the best company in the world!" And in the two performances of *Concerto Barocco* I saw, the dancing of the eight girls behind Melissa Hayden and Farrell glowed with a brilliance that no earlier group had exhibited—the new brilliance of the company this year that justified Balanchine's high opinion of it. *The Four Temperaments* also was done superbly, except for the Phlegmatic Variation, in which Mitchell's performance was not an adequate replacement for Todd Bolender's.

Balanchine also did some work on two other masterpieces of the past. In *Symphony in C* there was additional choreography for the restored repetitions of the exposition sections of the first and last movements. In *The Prodigal Son* there was a new, and more openly obscene, dance for the two Servants; and a change in the Father's entrance in the last scene made it less effective than when he used to advance directly toward the Son a few steps and halt. On the other hand, the expected new divertissement in the second act of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* didn't materialize—the only change in this work being the blacking out of Oberon's eyes, with damaging effect to Villella's appearance and dramatic performance.

And there were new dancers in old parts. Violette Verdy was the first Eurydice, in *Orpheus*, to exhibit the joy she could be expected to

feel at her liberation. Jillana achieved a convincing grand style in *Swan Lake*; Patricia McBride, on the other hand, worked too hard at it. Jillana's Siren in *The Prodigal Son* was less successful—one damaging detail being the snarl on her face during the pas de deux of seduction, which would have been bad even if it hadn't resembled the snarl that was one of the high points of the burlesque seduction in Bolender's *Souvenirs*. Mimi Paul—taken from the corps last year for an astonishing solo performance in the second movement of *Symphony in C*—repeated it with even more authority in its exquisite and grand style. And Deni Lamont contributed an extraordinarily imagined and brilliantly executed Harlequin to a performance of *La Sonnambula* in which he substituted for Anthony Blum.

Despite the general brilliance of the operation, then, there were performances with leading parts danced ineffectively—and not only when injuries or illnesses compelled changes of cast. D'Amboise has the virtuosity that enables him to dispose of a display piece like *Pas de Deux* with an ease that makes the performance a pleasure to see; but his attempt at god-like grandeur in *Apollo* produces only a pompousness damaging to the piece. On the other hand, Conrad Ludlow's inadequacy for the technical feats of *Pas de Deux* is as painful to witness as it must be for him to exhibit; but his few performances in *Apollo* a couple of seasons ago were the most beautiful and satisfying since Eglevsky's in 1945. Matching of right dancer to right part would assign d'Amboise to *Pas de Deux* and Ludlow to *Apollo*; but what one saw was *Pas de Deux* with Ludlow and *Apollo* with d'Amboise. And though Ludlow was replaced by Vilella in a few later performances of *Pas de Deux*, he didn't appear in place of d'Amboise in any of the later performances of *Apollo*.

Reviews

ROBERT GORHAM DAVIS

The Perilous Balance¹

MOST PAPERBACK BOOKS ON THE NAZI PERIOD have a section of very ugly atrocity photographs conveniently grouped together so that—without mitigation by words—a casual browser can quickly absorb the full horror of them. Some pictures appear again and again: naked women with swollen bellies run in single file across a drab courtyard past indifferent guards; starved bodies, hardly more than a confusion of bare bones, slide from a dump truck; a man's shrunken head, still with an expression of startled protest, sports a luxuriance of wavy hair.

No one knows what happens in the psyches of young males who pore over these pictures. No one knows what happens to delicate youthful sensibilities at Saturday afternoon double-feature horror shows or during prolonged scenes of torture and dismemberment in the more pretentious historical films.

Psychologists produce opinions at public hearings, but these opinions contradict each other and are based on no really assessable evidence. The professor of literature is in a worse case. Talking about literary effect, he uses a quasi-psychological vocabulary without being committed to it intellectually. Most literature, he agrees, is highly charged with erotic or destructive fantasies. But in serious literature, literature worth teaching, these provocations, these inner excitements, are supposedly balanced and distanced by what makes art—by style, form, ideas, social criticism, the reality principle. Or perhaps the art lies in the balance itself. On one pan of the scales are piled coprophilia, sibling rivalry, fear of the vagina dentata, a yen for Huckleberry Finn or pear-shaped breasts; on the other, in exactly the same measure, complexity of structure, Platonism, verbal brilliance, theories of government, Jungian archetypes, moral earnestness.

In *A Modest Proposal*, the gloatingly detailed accounts of butchering and eating children are made tolerable and even delightful to those who would otherwise be too sensitive to stomach them. Swift

¹ THE TICKET THAT EXPLODED, by William Burroughs. Olympia Press. 18 n.f. A CLOCKWORK ORANGE, by Anthony Burgess. W. W. Norton. \$3.95. THE SECOND STONE, by Leslie A. Fiedler. Stein & Day. \$5.95. YOUNG CRANKSHAW, by Cecil Hemley. Harcourt, Brace & World. \$4.50. THE BIRDCAGE, by John Bowen. Harper and Row. \$3.95. RAISE HIGH THE ROOFBEAM, CARPENTERS and SEYMOUR—An Introduction, by J. D. Salinger. Little Brown. \$4.00. GET READY FOR BATTLE, by R. Praver Jhabvala. W. W. Norton. \$3.95. THE SERPENT AND THE ROPE, by Raja Rao. Pantheon. \$5.95.

could be freely, elegantly cruel in order to stir up social indignation, also pleasurable. How much hypocrisy is involved is hard to say, but the effect of high art in Homer, Euripides, Dante and Shakespeare seems often to lead the refined and imaginative to associate all intensely representational visions of other people's suffering with deep immediate pleasure on their own part, even if this pleasure be of an aesthetic or tragic kind.

Coleridge put the idea of balance most eloquently when he described the ideal poet as bringing the whole soul of man into activity with the faculties subordinated to each other "according to their relative worth and dignity," and "with a more than usual emotion" combined "with a more than usual order." I. A. Richards revived the idea in his early books of criticism. But what happens to it when we come up against William Burroughs and some of the other authors in this list? One side goes down kerplunk. Words like "soul" and "worth" and "dignity" become ridiculously irrelevant.

In Burroughs' *The Ticket that Exploded* the science fiction aspects are hardly coherent or amusing enough to balance the obsessively iterated sodomite fantasies, products of "masturbating afternoons." The monotony of the incomplete, mostly unconnected sentences is that of a twitching nerve. As in the Nazi atrocity pictures, or features in the *National Enquirer*, the obsession is with the human body as something to be violated, damaged, destroyed. "I caught a final glimpse of her agonized face eaten by caustic slime." In fact the novel contains many references to atrocity pictures: "glowing torture films in a land of black food," "a smell of sewage and decay breathing from years of torture films."

Since "pain and sex form flesh identity," the invaders from Venus, who want "to retain the flesh gimmick in some form" are referred to contemptuously by other cosmic groups as "terminal flesh addicts of course motivated by pornographic torture films." For Burroughs "all human sex is this unsanitary arrangement whereby two entities attempt to occupy the same three-dimensional coordinate points, giving rise to the sordid latrine brawls which have characterized a planet based on 'The Word,' that is, on separate flesh engaged in endless sexual conflict. . . . (It will be readily understandable that a program of systematic frustration was necessary in order to sell this crock of sewage as Immortality, The Garden of Delights, and LOVE)." But still there is no renunciation of the flesh. In a very narrow, literal sense the book is Reichian. Orgasms are as numerous and copious as the fountains of Rome, though hardly as various and beautiful. Much of the time *The Ticket that Exploded* sounds like Dr. Gunn's Family Medical Book rewritten by Jules Verne under the influence of heroin and haunted by "ghostly rectums."

It is easy enough to treat such a book as pathology, or to take the fact that Burroughs exists and is widely read and part of a literary movement as warning that some sort of counter-action is necessary.

But this is not a literary judgment, and may be, as Sartre argued in the case of Jean Genet's early work, an inhumane one. We cannot know what the vision means unless we experience it totally, giving ourselves up to it as we do to other works of art, with suspension of disbelief and—in this instance—of distaste. We must confront Burroughs as a free being who in some sense chose to have his kind of life and write his kind of book. Our solemn, almost religious duty is to reach the bottom of his experience, take on the burden of it, see ourselves in it, temporarily *be* Burroughs. There may even be hypocrisy in pretending it is a burden. Some of the violence and filth is an expression of Swiftian disgust at the way things are. But obviously, as was true of Swift, the author delights in such imaginings. If we read the book properly we can feel the pleasure also—or learn to. Since we are also human, with the same polymorphous-perverse background, the possibility is there.

But *should* we want to? And what is the relation of such disciplining of the sensibilities on our part with a humanistic education? The trouble with a psychological theory like that of Coleridge and Richards lies in the fact that the weights of the elements put on the scales vary greatly for different people at different times. In principle those who are immature and highly suggestible should be restricted to a literature in which distancing and moral consequences are clearly emphasized, whereas the mature and philosophically minded may need a stronger dose of passion and action to keep them in touch with reality. In practice, exactly the opposite happens. Such controls as Plato might advocate are vanishing from our society. The inflammable, the immature and the uncultured may choose to take their erotic and sadistic fantasies straight, and are encouraged to do so by all the persuasive powers of the mass media.

This contradiction would not matter so much if the experience of art were purely hedonistic and without consequence outside of art. But even the New Critics talk about moral sensibility, truth-values, wisdom. Literature is taught in the universities as something which not only delights but instructs. "Instruct" means literally to "build in." If good literature builds-in what is good, can bad literature build-in what is bad, create dispositions to actions, patterns of associations, false judgments, perverse pleasures, denials of responsibility, which are harmful to the individual and society?

The usual answer, especially in opposition to censorship, is that though good books do good, the bad books do no harm. In fact, they do good also. They permit each reader to develop his own taste and judgment, to learn to reject the inferior which is in such obvious contrast to the superior. This would be wonderful if it were true, but it is clearly inconsistent with the facts.

Another currently popular answer—Kierkegaardian, apocalyptic—argues that things are so bad generally that anything is good in literature that is excessive, that has shock value, that stirs us out of our complacency. But the people who read such books are not the complacent

ones. The Nazi atrocity pictures suggest that some things *are* worse than our present condition. Though change is certainly necessary, it matters in which direction it goes. If it is to occur without sinking us completely, it will probably very much need the wisdom, control, magnanimity and sympathy which literature under some circumstances is capable of teaching, or "building in."

Very relevant is the English novel, *A Clockwork Orange*, experimental in a double sense. The teen-age narrator Alex is a murderous Holden Caulfield, ingenious and witty in a horrid way, who lives in a controlled, badly controlled, society of the very near future. Alex and his pals and most of the young people around him are totally alienated. They devote themselves to sex, violence, drugs and—significantly—music of all kinds, Beethoven as well as rock-and-roll. Nearly every night, like the rather more aristocratic Mohawks in eighteenth century London, they go out stealing, raping, smashing up homes and shops, just for the sport of it, and fighting other gangs with knives and chains.

All this is described in detail and with relish. The author, Anthony Burgess, maintains distance by using a strange argot, partly slang but mostly made of what seem to be Russian words, "tashtook," "ptitsas," "litsos," "britva," "devotchka," "slovos," "goloss." There are two or three to a sentence often, and the reader has gradually to learn them from context. Russian words are chosen because Russia suggests a brutal statism. The novelty of the terms and the slight effort required to find and remember their meanings keeps from being too monotonously gory the chronicle of meaningless brutalities boastfully described by their perpetrator.

Alex is finally sent to prison for the murder of an old lady. Clever and eager for release, he gets himself chosen as the first subject of a new experiment in treating delinquents. He is given an improved form of the drug used to cure alcohol and tobacco addiction. While this drug is sickeningly at work throughout his body, Alex, with eyes propped open, is forced to watch Nazi horror films. At last he is so thoroughly conditioned that seeing or reading about or even thinking of violence makes him sick. It is the calculated reversal of those situations in art and life in which cruelty or particular perversions get reinforced because doing them or having them described by others is associated with immediate pleasure. What makes Alex indignant—and his capacity for indignation is one of his most convincing qualities—is the fact that Beethoven is used during the experiment by an insensitive psychologist who thinks of music simply "as a useful emotion-heightener."

As a result, Alex is tossed back defenseless into the world, without even the solace of music. In a series of coincidental meetings that make the novel pure parable, he encounters former associates and victims who, one and all, to an extent which is a libel on humanity, seize upon his helplessness as a chance to get back at him. This makes Alex even more righteously indignant, an indignation which the author shares.

Using Sartre's argument in *Saint Genet, Comédien et Martyr*, he turns Alex into an articulate apostle of existential or even Christian freedom. The state committed a far worse crime than anything which Alex had done, when it took away his interior freedom to be himself. The state is afraid of selves that can freely choose. It doesn't matter that they may choose evil. In earlier novels from *Great Expectations* to *An American Tragedy*, social conditions or false social values were made responsible for forcing the individual into crime. Society should be in the dock, we were told, instead of the accused. But *A Clockwork Orange* insists, not very convincingly, that Alex chooses evil freely because he enjoys it. This choice must be respected, even if the destructions and rapes and maimings totally violate the practical, if not metaphysical, freedom of other people. By a perverse logic, images of violence are put at the service of a dreadful, dead-end concept of freedom. At the conclusion of the novel, Alex, for complicated political reasons, has been deconditioned and lies in bed, a junior Caligula, listening to the scherzo of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony and imagining himself cutting up the bloody face of the whole world with his "britva."

Only slightly less fantastic than the two preceding pieces of fiction, Leslie Fiedler's *The Second Stone* also resembles them as an experiment in associative conditioning. The second Stone of the title, Clem Stone, is living as an unsuccessful writer in Rome when his longtime pal from Newark, Mark Stone, editor of *Thou*, turns up to organize an international conference on Love. The names suggest kidney stones and testicles, but also Mark Twain and his fascination with twins.

Sponsored by the United States Embassy, the congress is financed by a manufacturer of contraceptives and other accompaniments or stimulants to the act of love. This occasions some ingenious sex fantasizing very like that in *The Ticket that Exploded*; in fact Burroughs' and Fiedler's imaginations have a good deal in common.

While Mark is trying to hold his avant-garde religious and literary performers under control in the turbulent Roman atmosphere, Clem devotes himself successfully to getting Mark's pregnant wife into bed with him and keeping her busy there. Clem, though intelligent, is an unlovely, untidy, unhealthy character with extremely offensive personal habits. The intention of the novel is to condition the reader's responses as negatively as Alex's were in *A Clockwork Orange*. Who, after reading Mr. Fiedler, would want to make love or think about it for some time? The chi-chi abstractions about love voiced by the frauds and vogueists at the congress are deliberately linked associatively with the less pleasant particulars of what goes on in Clem's bathroom and between his unwashed sheets.

Some of the verbal horseplay is funny, and some of the ideas being mocked deserve Menippean or Huxleyan satire. But the satirist has no position of his own, the exaggerated phrases cancel each other out, and all meaning or possibility of it soon disappears down a particular and often invoked drain. As in *The Ticket that Exploded* or *A Clockwork*

Orange the reader feels trapped. There is no out. Only four or five paragraphs in the whole novel, one of them on Michelangelo's *Pieta*, suggest how much has been omitted in the way of beauty, history, magnanimity, myth and a dozen other elements one might name.

Fiedler obviously does not use Clem's dirtiness and reductiveness merely for satiric purposes; his relish for this sort of thing seems inexhaustible. If the reader goes on reading, he is forced into a prolonged intimacy with Clem's body that suggests some of Burroughs' obsessions. And dislike of this intimacy does not necessarily imply distaste for bodies. On the contrary, the more one appreciates bodies, the less tolerable all this becomes. Yet one can only assume, as Anthony Burgess did of his delinquent Alex, that this is the way Fiedler chooses freely to be. But what then does literature or systematic literary study accomplish if teaching great books for twenty years in a university leaves the taste and imagination at the level displayed in *The Second Stone* and Fiedler's volume of short stories, *Nude Croquet*?

In *The Second Stone* intellectual self-contempt, the refusal to grant any dignity or worth to literary men, is projected with energetic virulence. In *Young Crankshaw* and *The Birdcage* the derogation is nearly as complete, but takes a milder and more agreeable form. For one thing, these novels are not fantasies. Though the principal characters are treated with satiric detachment, they and the people around them are credible. The reader becomes immediately involved with the way they work out—or fail to work out—their problems.

John Crankshaw is a young beau of the late 1930's living in precarious affluence on a legacy, apart from his family while still emotionally bound to them. John is devoted to girls, poetry and leftist politics in descending order of seriousness. On an altruistic impulse he gives shelter and support to a gifted, unscrupulous writer as offensive as some of the characters in Fiedler's novel. Then in a descent from high-principled patience to weakness he lets Rafferty gradually take over his apartment, his girls—and even his mother on her deathbed. At the end Rafferty achieves a resounding theatrical success after betraying everyone, right and left, with resourcefulness, brutality and occasional charm. Crankshaw, upset by his mother's death and acknowledging his limitations, retreats back into the kind of life his parents had led. Writing with skilled assurance, Cecil Hemley makes the story very touching. He obviously likes people, and his hero, with all his cockiness, naiveté, reasonableness and decency, is appealingly true. Some of the scenes in which he is caught between his mother and his girls are very funny.

The satirical stance creates here some of the problems of Fiedler's book, though these are far less extreme. Crankshaw's conventionally advanced views on art and politics are easily made to seem absurd, especially from the perspective of the 1960's. But since the comic purpose requires that serious literature and history—the Spanish Civil War, for instance—be kept very far in the background, there is nothing except Hemley's style to suggest by what higher forms of thought

and action Crankshaw's inadequacies are being measured. Stated meaning is reserved for the last sentence, when Crankshaw thinks with horror that "if there was no God, Rafferty was the world." Even in the novel, however, where religion had previously played as little part as history, Rafferty is not the world, and his career would not have been possible if most of the people he encountered did not live more or less responsibly in society with qualities which made his exploitation of them possible: love, affection, disinterestedness, generosity, and some real feeling for art and history.

The Birdcage by John Bowen, equally witty and engagingly told, has a very similar ending. Two youngish people in British television—referred to throughout by their full names, Peter Ash and Nora Palmer—have lived together unmarried for nine years. Although Peter is moderator of a widely distributed cultural seminar program, whereas Nora works administratively, she is the brighter and more perceptive of the two. They break up because their relationship does not seem able to contain what happened to selfish Peter as the result of his unexpected regression into homosexuality in Venice. But their separate experiments in overcoming loneliness have such disastrous implications that in a *faute-de-mieux* spirit they come back together again.

Their personal difficulties are as realistically and sympathetically described as John Crankshaw's. The time is the present, however, not the 'thirties, and many of the phrases which are Peter's stock in trade, phrases like "on the side of life," or E. M. Forster's "Only connect," are those tossed around by the symposiasts in Fiedler's novel. Peter Ash goes to pieces at the end when these phrases suddenly become real to him, and he catches at least a glimpse of the terrible disparity between what he says and what he is.

Although the tone—but not the substance—is prevailingly comic in Salinger's *Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters, and Seymour, an Introduction*, the detached condescension with which John Bowen and Cecil Hemley treated their heroes is conspicuously reversed. Both Salinger stories—if the second can be called a story—are told by an utterly admiring brother. The first, in the style of the Manhattan scenes in *The Great Gatsby*, describes how Buddy Glass, during wartime, arrives late at his brother Seymour's wedding, to find that Seymour has not turned up at all. The second is a long chat with the reader about Seymour's death. As everyone knows by now, both boys were geniuses in a family of geniuses that kept a quiz kid show supplied for many years. But all sibling rivalry has been sublimated, or transformed into its opposite.

Buddy's admiration for his brother is total; he was even glad as a boy that Seymour could run faster. Seymour was a homely fellow with a hairy body and lots of nose, and the way his brother goes on about him physically—his haircuts and dirty neck—has a rather Fiedlerian flavor. When Buddy, as a beginning writer, got upset if his sisters said he sounded like Seymour, Seymour asked him in a letter, "Is it so bad

that we sometimes sound like each other? The membrane is so thin between us. Is it so important for us to keep in mind which is whose?" Fiedler's two Stones, both originally named Mark or Marcus, shared ideas, clothes, girls, until they were through college.

It is not clear that the dead Seymour really exists as the adequately imagined object of Buddy's adoration, that the author is doing more in the second sketch than talk about himself. Seymour is represented chiefly by letters and diary entries which sound, through the so-thin membrane, like Buddy or Salinger. As in the novels already discussed, the author's literary standards are implied chiefly by his own style. Seymour's widow will not let Buddy quote any of the 184 poems that make Seymour one of the four or five best poets of his generation. All we know of his mind are some Zen or Vedanta inspired formulations that sound not unlike those made fun of at the end of *The Second Stone* and *The Birdcage*.

Salinger is aware of the danger, yet cannot remove it because in "Seymour, an Introduction," the knowledgeable, well-intentioned formulae of love are not dramatized sufficiently. But he clearly does not want to carve up the bloody face of the world with a knife. He wants to project the ardent Glass family loyalty and affection, and make all people, especially commonplace people, his brothers and sisters, and he prefers them with their skins on. Though the young ladies whom Buddy teaches shine with misinformation, still they shine; he can think of his classroom, even with Terrible Miss Zabel in it, as holy ground. Seymour told him that all our lives we "go from one little piece of Holy Ground to the next." But it is also true that where holiness depends so much on a willed attitude in the person who calls objects "holy" rather than in the revealed and moving qualities of the objects themselves the attitude can, like a weathervane, shift in almost any direction with the intellectual winds. Sartre's title, *Saint Genet, Comédien et Martyr*, points in one of the directions.

Novels by Westerners talk fashionably about Eastern religious ideas without being able to realize them in feeling or action. Two of the books being reviewed here come out of the society in which such ideas developed and where they presumably have some force.

R. Prawer Jhabvala's *Get Ready for Battle* is a diverting and informative novel about social life in India since Independence, but it turns out to be written by a Jewish refugee from Poland, educated in England, who married an Indian architect and lives with him and their three children in Delhi. As a Westerner who chose India, Mrs. Jhabvala might be particularly suited to tell us what Indian society has to offer in the way of values and perceptions not found in the West. Her answer seems to be: not much; but perhaps Mrs. Jhabvala is prevented from expressing what is deepest in her own feeling by the tradition of critical realism in which she so successfully writes.

Vishnu, an Indian John Crankshaw, works for his father, a wealthy real estate promoter, and lives in his father's house with fat, handsome,

childlike Mala, his partner in an arranged marriage. His mother, Sarla Devi, an ascetic, sensitive social reformer, has left his father and lives in the house of her brother, a boastful idler who amuses himself with a meagerly paid dancing girl while waiting for an unlikely settlement for land lost with the separation of Pakistan. Vishnu's father's publicly acknowledged mistress wants him to get a divorce and marry her, but habitual conservatism and fear of offending clients hold him back. Under the influence of a friend who talks vaguely of establishing an experimental village school, Vishnu proposes to leave his father's business for some sort of idealistic service. Instead, he starts a small factory. The principal action is Sarla Devi's attempt to keep a lot of poor squatters from being forced off land which her ex-husband wants for a real estate project. The Indian poor turn out to be as suspicious, corruptible and difficult to help as Chekhov's Russian peasants. Discouraged, Sarla Devi knows she can be free in spirit only if she keeps on fighting. Here "spirit" really means "spirit." With her prayer rug, her meditations, her cleanly swept bare room, Sara Devi is a truly Eastern reformer. She wants to save rich and poor alike from the selfish and materialist illusions that deceive all the other characters in the novel.

Raja Rao, author of *The Serpent and the Rope*, was born to just such an ancient and well-known Brahmin family as the one to which his narrator, Rama, belongs. Interested only from a lofty height in politics and social reform, Raja Rao flies us over whole Himalayan ranges of religion and metaphysics. Rama tells the story with a Brahmin's refinement of sensibility, sensibility intended for delight. In this novel—unique among those reviewed—the odors please: jasmine, tamarind, scented grasses, the sea, a particular musk on a woman's skin.

Sent to a university in France, Rama marries a somewhat older French woman, Madeleine, who is already a teacher. He is studying the possible Indian sources of the Catharite or Albigensian heresy, and this inspires her to look for Buddhist sources of the Grail legend. Rama's interests involve him in long conversations with men and women friends in Paris, London, Cambridge and Benares. These erudite, witty, relaxed conversations about scholarship, communism, love, family traditions, India, Rilke, monarchy and Cézanne are not oral-sadistic slugfests in which all meaning disappears, but the sensitive shared exploration of positions which friends have reached, often through a good deal of suffering. Madeleine herself, after the loss of a child and partial alienation from Rama, becomes a Buddhist. This is not a matter of a few catch phrases, but months of study, fasting, discipline, self-abnegation. She is very like Simone Weil.

Sometimes Rama's Heraclitian paradoxes about time and history, illusion and reality, self and non-self, suggest a detachment that could become indifferentism. But *The Serpent and the Rope* is saved from this by a deep concern with experience in all its particularity, not only Rama's own but the experience of people he cares about, the Indian girl at Cambridge—a Communist, whom he loves in a way very dif-

ferent from his love of Madeleine—or his sister whom he comes really to know as she goes through the elaborate preparatory ceremonies for her wedding. Just because of the dominance of mind and illusion in his metaphysics, he can bring the actual world more vividly into being than can novelists for whom reality is a brutally given fact. He can draw together, as mind and memory do, places, people, anecdotes, history in the making, quotations from the poets, delight in a woman's hair and skin, and a peculiarly Eastern way of knowing illness, error and death. Rao writes with great virtuosity, achieving effects that only occasionally seem too shimmering or Pateresque.

What Rao can do, as most of these other novelists cannot, is to imagine civilization, to recreate in imagination, as Proust and Mann and James did, the satisfactions that arise from being civilized. This does not mean identifying civilization with the present state of society; on the contrary, the more vivid the possibility of a civilized heightening of being, the more intense the desire to change a society which blocks its attainment. Nor does this mean ignoring evil, but rather recognizing evil for what it is in relation to the desired *goods* which it threatens to destroy.

Civilization, Freud said, is bought at the price of instinctual gratifications. Mankind has generally been willing to pay the price because it is the only way to be human. But the balance is unstable, constantly imperiled; it takes great effort to maintain it. Fortunately, past efforts are preserved in the form of art, which continues to strengthen as it gives delight. Works of art are not just a balance of forces. They create eternal objects—Don Quixote, the ducal court at Urbino, Lord Jim's leap from the *Patna*—by which other kinds of experience can be judged. These are shared objects, and their invoked presence makes it unnecessary for each new work of art to fight the whole battle by itself.

Many writers now want an end to compromise. To them most works of art seem, as dreams were to Freud, compromise formations. For them society, any society, is something outside the individual, imposed upon him, unimaginable as an act of choice. They want to strike through the mask, to rewrite past literature in terms of an unmasked reality. But this reality is, as Raja Rao would say, an illusion, the impossible product of human beings trying to shock humanity. The stories of Poe would collapse completely if they were reduced to the primalities that Marie Bonaparte quite correctly sees buried in them. Even the infantile family romance would have to disappear, because it is a social relation. All that could remain would be bodies in various positions, bodies without sharable minds or imaginations. In this final physical solipsism, the individual is totally free. But such isolation is actually intolerable. So inescapable is the need for society, for sharing, for a response from others, that if only bodies are left, then those bodies must be entered by every conceivable means, as Burroughs so endlessly fantasies; or, since they cannot answer in any other way, cut up with *A Clockwork Orange's* britvas to make them scream.

VIVIAN MERCIER

My Neighbor's Garden, and What I Saw There

GARDENERS, THEY TELL ME, get a strange feeling—half envious, half smug—when they peer over the fence into a neighbor's yard. The other fellow has some nice stuff, all right, but he's not miraculously exempt from weeds or pests, either. I know that feeling: after battling to protect the choice blooms of *Melancholia Beckettii* or *Joyceia carnosa multifolia* against choking weeds, parasitic fungi, pirate ants and leafcutter bugs, it is rather a relief to climb the lofty walls, restored to their eighteenth-century grandeur regardless of expense, which surround the domain reserved for the cultivation of *Indignatio Swiftiana saeva*. Looking in, I can see that there are no weeds in the gravel walks, but a crazy gardener has mistaken bulbs for weeds in that parterre; preconceptions about Augustan order must have gone to his head. And who let that American in there with a Rototiller? What's more, the goddam rabbits are still getting in somehow, in spite of all these walls with their expensive Foundations.

Even an outsider cannot fail to be aware of some of the trends in twentieth-century Swift studies—not all represented in the three books under review.¹ Most important, of course, have been the re-editing of the texts and the pruning of the Swift canon. They began before the first war with Temple Scott's edition of the prose works and F. Elrington Ball's of the correspondence. Herbert Davis has since almost completed the Shakespeare Head edition of the prose works. Sir Harold Williams has produced a masterly edition of the poems. The late D. Nichol Smith edited Swift's *Correspondence with Charles Ford*, and George Sherburn's edition of Pope's correspondence necessarily made its contribution to Swift scholarship also. There have been important editions of individual works such as the *Journal to Stella*, *The Drapier's Letters* and *A Tale of a Tub*. All in all, the tasks of the biographer, the critic and the literary or social historian who wish to deal with Swift have been made incomparably easier—or so it might appear, at any rate.

Further, the concern of twentieth-century literary critics with such

¹ SWIFT: THE MAN, HIS WORKS, AND THE AGE, Vol. I, MR. SWIFT AND HIS CONTEMPORARIES, by *Irvin Ehrenpreis*. Harvard University Press. \$6.00. JONATHAN SWIFT AND IRELAND, by *Oliver W. Ferguson*. Univ. of Illinois Press. \$5.00. CADENUS: A Reassessment in the Light of New Evidence of the Relationships Between Swift, Stella and Vanessa, by *Sybil Le Brocqy*. Dolmen Press: Oxford Univ. Press. \$5.00.

themes as irony and ambiguity has led to a renewed interest in Swift as a literary artist. His poetry has recently been treated with a respect unparalleled since his death, while his prose works—though they were never entirely neglected—are now being subjected to a flood of analysis and explication. One comes across articles of this type everywhere in the learned journals, until one is bored to death with the mental gymnastics provoked by *A Modest Proposal* and, especially, by Part IV (Yahoos and Houyhnhnms) of *Gulliver's Travels*. Really, it becomes embarrassing and even a little painful for those of us who have grown up on Eliot, Kafka and Joyce to hear the straining muscles and creaking joints of an "eighteenth-century man" who has not been keeping in critical shape but feels he ought to tackle the rings and parallel bars once in a while. Critical books with titles like John M. Bullitt's *Jonathan Swift and the Anatomy of Satire* are now quite common. Professor Irvin Ehrenpreis, in a recent article entitled "The Meaning of Gulliver's Last Voyage," has set out to refute an earlier article of his own on the same subject. I respect his integrity, but I'm sorry the author of *A Tale of a Tub* isn't still around to enjoy the spectacle of a scholar quarreling with himself. Professor Ehrenpreis concludes, this time, that in Part IV "The object ridiculed is not Europeans, Christians, Irish landlords, or the middle class; it is mankind." As I recall, Voltaire said the same thing in a letter an awfully long time ago: *Swift se moque du genre humain*.

Countless well-meaning amateurs have tried to capture the whole of Swift in a single volume. The very first book on him, *Remarks on the Life and Writings of Dr. Jonathan Swift*, by John, Earl of Orrery (who meant far from well), was of this type. In keeping with the modern trend toward specialization, and motivated also by understandable impatience with the feeble efforts of the non-specialists, many recent Swift scholars have deliberately narrowed their field. The outstanding monograph produced by this trend, to judge by the frequency with which it is cited, is Louis A. Landa's *Swift and the Church of Ireland*. Professor Oliver Ferguson's *Jonathan Swift and Ireland* belongs to the same school of specialization. Fortunately, its field is narrower than the title indicates; since Swift was born and lived the greater part of his life in Ireland, a book living up to this title would be nearly all-inclusive. In fact, it deals almost exclusively with the prose writing on Irish politics and economics which earned Swift his reputation as an Irish patriot. It does justice to the unselfish motives which prompted Swift to espouse "the Irish interest" although he regarded himself as essentially a transplanted Englishman. By neglecting the large body of Swift's verse on similar topics, Professor Ferguson makes his book less entertaining and less useful than it might otherwise have been; this sacrifice is counterbalanced by a gain in unity, for the book now focuses upon the decade 1720-1730, with *The Drapier's Letters* providing a substantial middle and *A Modest Proposal* the pathetic end.

Professor Ferguson interprets the latter pamphlet as Swift's ironic swan-song in Irish politics and a denunciation of the Irish for not taking Swift's advice about putting their own house in order. There is an element of truth in this view, but the *Proposal* ultimately denounces the English and, as we painfully acknowledge today, all mankind since or before the day it was written. Professor Ferguson has succumbed to the "intentional fallacy"; Swift may have intended to pierce only the narrow target—though I beg leave to doubt this interpretation—but that is not why we read *A Modest Proposal* with such compulsive attention today. Once again, *Swift se moque du genre humain*.

Only two generalizations about Swift studies have permanent value. The first is that all books about Swift contain several appendices: Professor Ehrenpreis' has eight and Mrs. Le Brocquy's, nine; Professor Ferguson offers a puny four "Appendixes" [*sic*]. The second generalization is that, after all these years, the amateur Swift students, like rabbits, refuse to become extinct. Mrs. Le Brocquy, who presides over a Dublin *salon* and is the mother of Louis Le Brocquy, a remarkable painter, typifies the amateur Swiftian, only one degree less pernicious than the amateur Joycean. Lord Orrery, we have seen, was the first of the species, and it was he who gave wide currency to the story of Swift's marriage to Stella, as well as toying with the possibility that both Swift and Stella were bastards of Sir William Temple. On the subject of Vanessa he really outdid himself, hinting that Swift was impotent and describing, as though he were an eyewitness, Swift's "final visit" to Vanessa's house at Celbridge, when he "throwing down the letter upon her table, with great passion hastened back to his horse, carrying in his countenance the frowns of anger and indignation."

As long as the professional scholars cannot satisfactorily explain Swift's relationship with either Stella or Vanessa, they will continue to be plagued by the amateurs, especially as the latter have the embarrassing habit of making discoveries which the professionals themselves should have made first. The most important discovery claimed by Mrs. Le Brocquy concerns the existence of a petition—reproduced, along with two other documents, in her handsomely printed volume—presented to the English House of Lords by the Van Homrigh family in January 1711-12, which states that

Hester the daughter ["Vanessa"] is now come to Age: and in prospect of marriage, but cannot receive her portion by reason the said Bartholomew her Brother being only of the Age of 19 years cannot sell any part of the Devised premises without the Aid of an Act of Parliament.

Now, if the family were short of ready cash, as the widow Van Homrigh and her children often were, and if they did not wish to wait two years before selling some real estate in Ireland, it would sound very

plausible for them to claim that the attractive Vanessa, already of age, was "in prospect of marriage" whether she had any conspicuous suitors or not. Several eligible young men, as well as the middleaged and far from wealthy Swift, seem to have been in attendance, but Mrs. Le Brocquy at once jumps to the conclusion that Swift was the prospective bridegroom.

Again, on learning of a 1737 entry in an English burial register which records the interment of a certain "Thos. Swift Bro. to Dr. Jon. Swift, Dean of St. Patrick's Dublin. Decr. 3d.," she hastens to suggest that "Sir John [Temple, father of Sir William Temple] was the father of *all* Abigail Erick's children, and that Thomas, probably born about the Winter of 1664, was the eldest." Note that the register entry does not give Thomas Swift's age at death—nothing, in fact, except the words already quoted. On this flimsy basis not only Jonathan but his sister, Jane, and the alleged brother, Thomas, are made illegitimate.

Mrs. Le Brocquy can do even better than this: on the basis of no evidence at all, she concludes that Swift and Vanessa had an illegitimate child in 1714; that Swift's break with his mistress was caused by the dying Vanessa's begging Stella to take charge of the child; and that Stella did in fact take the child into her household under the name of Bryan M'Loghlin. (Why Mrs. Le Brocquy wants to become an obscure scholar, when she possesses all the imagination of a best-selling novelist, is a greater mystery than Swift's relationship to and with Stella.)

Mrs. Le Brocquy then finds an entry in the Register of St. Patrick's Cathedral for 21 August, 1731, in which the name of the dead person and the place of burial have (no doubt inadvertently) been left blank. Let me quote the exact words of this creative artist:

The mystery surrounding this extraordinary interment is very unlikely to be cleared away, but a possible solution would point to this nameless tomb as the last resting place of *little Master*, of the anonymous schoolboy who so resembled the Dean, of little Bryan M'Loghlin, who lived with Stella and was jealous of the lap-dog—of the ill-fated son of Esther Van Homrigh and Jonathan Swift, Dean of St. Patrick's Dublin.

In this remarkable passage, four individuals—at least one of whom probably never existed—are equated, although Mrs. Le Brocquy has presented not one shred of evidence which would encourage us to identify any one of them with any of the others. If that "nameless tomb" were ever identified and opened, as Christopher Marlowe's recently was, it might be found to contain either four little skeletons or—more likely—none.

Professor Ehrenpreis may sound like a spoilsport, but after a session with Mrs. Le Brocquy it was refreshing to read the following in his preface:

I have been less concerned to add than to eliminate fables; and those readers who look for my views on a long train of legendary Swiftiana will search in vain. Here, neither Swift nor Stella is made a bastard. . . .

He certainly makes good his claim that "compared with available biographies," the first volume of his projected three-volume work "aims at a new standard of thoroughness and accuracy." In his determination to employ only primary sources, he disregards all the early biographers except Deane Swift. Where evidence is lacking, he does not palm off speculation on us instead; where evidence exists, he does not accept it unchecked. (As he points out, Swift's own fragment of autobiography notoriously contains "as many errors as facts.")

Inevitably, many of the old nagging questions must continue to nag. Professor Ehrenpreis can offer no conclusive proof of a close friendship or blood relationship between the Swift and Temple families that would fully explain the almost paternal benevolence shown to Swift by Sir William Temple, nor does he attempt to explain the generous legacy given Stella by Sir William; he simply records it, deadpan, as follows: "young Esther, identified as 'servant to my sister,' received the valuable lease of certain lands in Ireland." Perhaps, after all, no surprise need be registered: Sir William may simply have liked and respected the girl; Swift did; even the unattractive Orrery praised her intelligence, wit, beauty and virtue—probably in order to blacken Swift the more by contrast.

The big problem for Professor Ehrenpreis in this first volume, which deals with the early life of Swift (1667-99), is the shortage of direct evidence; in his later volumes, on the contrary, the problem will be a plethora of evidence, much of it insignificant and some contradictory. In the absence of direct evidence, he has filled out his volume with indirect evidence, information about the persons and institutions that molded Swift in his formative years: family, country, church, cities (Dublin and Kilkenny), school and college, his teachers and classmates; also Sir William Temple's household, social and political associates, and literary work, not forgetting Sir William himself, the father-figure indispensable to a posthumous child.

I wonder whether Professor Ehrenpreis has not ranged too widely at times, including material because it is available rather than because it is relevant. The chapter on the Dublin Philosophical Society has only peripheral bearing on Swift, although it provides a valuable reminder of the city's intellectual alertness and awareness of new trends in science and philosophy. (This was the era that, in spite of the still half-medieval curriculum of Trinity College, produced the *avant-garde* philosophy of Berkeley; Locke had been squeezed into the syllabus alongside Aristotle.) Ehrenpreis's justification of this chapter has to begin with a "perhaps":

Perhaps the first source of what will appear as his indifference or hostility to the modern tradition of natural science was his meeting it under the misleading though attractive auspices of the Dublin Philosophical Society.

But as late as 1691, if the "Ode to the Athenian Society" is a reliable index, Swift was neither hostile nor indifferent to science.

Ehrenpreis has searched for direct evidence in likely places and made some important discoveries. His identification of Swift's maternal grandfather as the Rev. James Ericke, a clergyman of unorthodox theological views who left his English parish for Dublin in 1634, sounds convincing, if only because it seems to clear up some of the puzzles about Swift's mother. In religion and politics the Swifts would have been opposed to the Erickses; hence they may have been eager to have Jonathan educated away from his mother's influence though not ready to overwhelm him with affection; religious and political differences make people act like that. In regard to the vexed question of Swift's college career, Ehrenpreis has carefully restudied the Trinity archives. Both Swift's scholastic record and his infringements of discipline run closer to the average than one would expect those of a genius to do. Swift himself deplored his undergraduate academic record, but most of his fellow students would have been proud to equal it—that is, if his only surviving grades (those of Easter 1685) were typical. Ehrenpreis implies that these may be translated into contemporary American terms as follows: A's in Greek and Latin, C in Latin composition, D in physics (the Aristotelian variety). Only eight students in all received two A's at those examinations, but the D spoils Swift's average.

Ehrenpreis devotes about a third of his volume to analysis of Swift's earliest poems and prose works. Considered either for their intrinsic worth or as clues to Swift's intellectual and emotional configuration, the six poems appear too conventional to support such a weight of scrutiny. The same may be said of Temple's prose works, which, Ehrenpreis claims, helped to mold Swift's outlook and style. Undoubtedly Temple possessed an easy, lucid style which influenced Swift's, but that did not prevent him from being a bit of a bore; nothing I have read by Temple shows one-tenth of Swift's originality and force. The pages Ehrenpreis allots to *A Tale of a Tub* and *The Battle of the Books* are more easily justified, since these were the first literary works in which Swift's genius made itself manifest. Still, if one gives over forty pages to *A Tale of a Tub*, how many should be allotted to *Gulliver's Travels*? Eighty? A hundred? The readers of a scholarly biography are likely to be able to see for themselves many of the subtleties which Ehrenpreis feels obliged to point out to them. At this rate, he may need four more volumes rather than two.

Besides these piecemeal objections, I have one that applies to

Ehrenpreis's overall method. As he says in his preface, in order to help the reader

to judge both the degree to which Swift was representative of his generation and the degree to which he was either independent or eccentric . . . , I have drawn many parallels between Swift and his contemporaries.

The idea is basically sound, for too many earlier biographers have begun with the premise that Swift was a freak; nevertheless, if Swift had genuinely resembled some of the mediocrities to whom Ehrenpreis compares him, we shouldn't care enough about him to want to read one biography of him, let alone the dozens which have appeared in the last two centuries. I am reminded of a footnote by the Rev. John Mitford to his nineteenth-century life of Swift; referring to Stella, Vanessa, and "a third female" who "became enamoured of the Dean," this mediocrity comments:

To *me* this is all astonishing, who never experienced the slightest voluntary offering of any female affection, and whose timid advances have generally been received with coldness, and dismissed with indifference.

Did anybody ever write a biography of Mitford, or would one want to read such a thing if it existed?

It is true that in the period we are dealing with Swift did not differ greatly from his contemporaries: in spite of *A Tale of A Tub*, he had not yet achieved his true style in prose, let alone in verse; rejected by the one woman to whom he had made advances, Jane Waring, he had not yet reached the stage where women made advances to him; he had mingled with statesmen, but as a deferential listener rather than as one who laid down the law. In short, the treatment suitable for the younger Swift (alive or dead) would be totally inappropriate to the formidable Dean. If Professor Ehrenpreis continues to "play it cool" when he comes to the Vanessa affair, say, he may wind up just as far from the truth in one direction as Mrs. Le Brocquy does in the other. I very much regret that I haven't yet read his earlier book, *The Personality of Jonathan Swift*, for it must provide important clues to the likely orientation of his future volumes. I have no desire to belittle the achievement of his first volume, only to point out the pitfalls which still await him—but I'm getting to sound more and more like an amateur Swiftian. Excuse me, I must go and cultivate my garden.

MARIUS BEWLEY

The Poetry of Longfellow

IT IS UNFORTUNATE THAT THE LATE NEWTON ARVIN should have chosen Longfellow as the subject of his last book.¹ Mr. Arvin's three critical studies of Hawthorne, Whitman, and Melville were valuable additions to literary biography. The *Hawthorne* in particular, which appeared in 1929, was as judicious an assessment of its subject as one could find before Matthiessen's *The American Renaissance*. The critical judgments in *Melville* are sometimes more debatable, but it is one of the most useful and stimulating brief general studies of him that we have. Mr. Arvin was lucky three times in his subjects and his timing, the first biography antedating the Hawthorne revival by a few years, the *Melville* riding the full wave of its subject's "rediscovery."

Mr. Arvin's new book is proof that Longfellow is a subject in whom it is very difficult to become interested. This is in fact a downhearted book. Mr. Arvin exhibits a certain embarrassment by seeming to undermine, in a running series of remarks, the sufficiently modest claims he makes for Longfellow's talent. The text is studded with discouraging statements like these:

Even in his own day he had done nothing to extend the boundaries of poetic speech or to revivify the diction of American poetry.

The Spanish Student is much too fragile and weightless a piece of work to deserve the injustices of labored treatment.

. . . we are inclined to feel that, on the whole, in spite of its lapses, there are a good many things worse than *The Song of Hiawatha*.

. . . the slack commonplace of these inferior poems ["Excelsior," "A Psalm of Life," "The Village Blacksmith"] insured their universal currency for many decades.

. . . if we are looking for either a heroic largeness or a novelistic roundness of characterization [in *Evangeline*] we shall be badly let down.

In spite of his ambitions for it, *Hyperion* is at best a slight and imponderous book, and in some stretches the thinness of the air makes one breathe in gasps.

It goes without saying, now, that there is much that is facile and flaccid in these five volumes.

Longfellow's moralizing poems fail, either wholly or relatively, because he was not a moralist.

¹ LONGFELLOW, by *Newton Arvin*. Little, Brown. \$6.75.

One regrets that, with all this ardor behind it, *Outre-Mer* is no more impressive than it is.

Such remarks can be found on most pages, and the cumulative effect is very depressing. On the positive side, Mr. Arvin's extended discussions of the poems he considers best does little to dispel the greyness. The book ends with a curious Epilogue that is, in fact, an apology for writing on Longfellow. It is laboured in tone, and if some of its observations are just most of them are also obvious. One of the points that Mr. Arvin makes here is that Longfellow's critical reputation has suffered in our time because of "the revolution in taste, associated with the names of Eliot and, later, Tate, Ransom, and others. . . . The valuation, in poetry, of such qualities as ambiguity, tension, and irony was bound to result in the repudiation of much of romantic poetry. . . ."

Having made Mr. Arvin's biography the occasion for reading rather largely in Longfellow again, I doubt if one need go so far afield to explain the decline in his reputation. Longfellow is pleasant enough to read, but there is no important nineteenth century American poet who has written so little of what is unmistakably poetry as opposed to the mere competence of verse. Longfellow has written no poem that proclaims a poet as clearly as a single line of Emerson's is able to:

In May, when sea winds pierced our solitudes. . . .

Although he was notoriously "literary" in half a dozen languages, a translator and something of a literary antiquarian, Longfellow never established an interesting relation in any of his poems with an earlier tradition. The conscious and effective use that Emerson was able to make of the seventeenth century in his beautiful "Threnody" for his little boy who had died would have been beyond Longfellow's competence—perhaps even beyond his comprehension:

For flattering planets seemed to say
This child should ill of ages stay,
By wondrous tongue, and guided pen,
Bring the flown Muses back to men.
Perchance not he but Nature ailed,
The world and not the infant failed.
It was not ripe yet to sustain
A genius of so fine a strain,
Who gazed upon the sun and moon
As if he came into his own,
And, pregnant with his grander thought,
Brought the old order into doubt.
His beauty once their beauty tried;
They could not feed him, and he died,

And wandered backward as in scorn,
To wait an aeon to be born.

But it was not only Emerson who surpassed Longfellow. With the exception of Poe, Longfellow was inferior to all his poetic peers in the American nineteenth century. He never discovered a unique quality as distinctive and distinguished as William Cullen Bryant's in a few poems—for example these three stanzas from a longer, little read poem of his:

The path we planned beneath October's sky,
Along the hillside, through the woodland shade,
Is finished; thanks to thee, whose kindly eye
Has watched me, as I plied the busy spade;
Else had I wearied, ere this path of ours
Had pierced the woodland to its inner bowers.

Yet, 'twas a pleasant toil to trace and beat,
Among the glowing trees, this winding way,
While the sweet autumn sunshine, doubly sweet,
Flushed with the ruddy foliage, round us lay,
As if some gorgeous cloud of morning stood,
In glory, mid the arches of the wood.

A path! what beauty doth a path bestow
Even on the dreariest wild! its savage nooks
Seem home-like where accustomed footsteps go,
And the grim rock puts on familiar looks.
The tangled swamp, through which a pathway strays,
Becomes a garden with strange flowers and sprays.

And of course Longfellow entirely lacked the moral vitality that Whittier put into his poetry, and the intensity of feeling that makes *Snow-Bound*, particularly in its later passages, a great minor poem. Whatever amiable things the well-disposed might find to say about Longfellow's poetry, it has a dullness that is finally matched in the American tradition only by the achievement of Edwin Arlington Robinson.

To write a book on Longfellow should be, first of all, a matter of critical strategy in which the subject as humanist, man of letters, and benevolent representative of American culture, living in estate at Craigie House, should hold the centre of the picture. There is no doubt that Longfellow played this role beautifully, and that American letters remain in his debt because he did so. His real function was not unlike that of his contemporary, Charles Eliot Norton. Four years ago Mr. Kermit Vanderbilt published a biography, *Charles Eliot Norton: Apostle of Culture in a Democracy*, which it seems to me might

provide the ideal model for a book on Longfellow. The limitations of the two men were oddly similar, Longfellow perhaps having a margin of advantage in that he was less a puritan and hence more generous in his response to literature. There is no special pleading, no condescension, no apologies in Mr. Vanderbilt's book, but lucid analysis of Norton's teaching, scholarship, literary criticism, and very considerable public services. I can think of no biography offhand that gives as rewarding an insight into the intellectual life of this particular milieu in America, and it is difficult to see why the Master of Craigie House could not have been presented as significantly in this respect as the Master of Shady Hill.

Mr. Vanderbilt did not assume that Norton's scholarship and writing were still of much intrinsic interest in themselves, whatever the figure of the man himself might be. Mr. Arvin makes the mistake of assuming that Longfellow's poems either are or ought to be—hence the tone of embarrassment which I have already remarked on. From the moment he is committed to an extended critical examination of the poetry, Mr. Arvin, Longfellow, and the reader are in for trouble. It is difficult to see why this kind of detailed attention should have been given the poems at all. For example, Mr. Arvin devotes two more pages to a discussion of *Hiawatha* and *The Courtship of Miles Standish* than he gave to *The Scarlet Letter* in his *Hawthorne*; *Evangeline* receives fourteen pages of commentary to only seven for *Billy Budd* in *Melville*; he analyzes *Hyperion* at as great length as he treated *The Confidence Man*; "Bartleby the Scrivener" receives two pages of discussion in the earlier biography, *The Spanish Student* four in *Longfellow*. One's first response to this disproportion in a biography written on the same scale as the earlier ones is a rather piercing WHY? WHY? WHY? But there is nothing in Mr. Arvin's analyses of Longfellow to provide an answer.

As a critic of poetry Mr. Arvin is far from being as satisfactory as he always was with the novel. There is a good deal of old-fashioned impressionism in his method:

If *Der arme Heinrich* suggests a small window of stained glass, in pure and primary colors, *The Golden Legend* suggests a softly hued but loosely composed mural, perhaps in a library, in the manner of some nineteenth century Pre-Raphaelite.

The Courtship of Miles Standish has

. . . the tonality of the Massachusetts seacoast when the wind is from the east, the rather bleak landscape washed with a grey mist.

. . . the minor key in which many of these poems are written suggests the plaintive nocturne of some lesser romantic composer.

... he is an accomplished, sometimes an exquisite, craftsman, like a master in some minor art, a potter or a silversmith.

Much space is devoted to critical comments that persist in seeming pointless—that, at best, do little or nothing to take one into the poem, and which consist largely of prose paraphrase. In a highly representative passage, he says of *Hiawatha*:

It is an Indian Summer poem, and it is also a late-afternoon or sunset poem. The sunsets abound in the feeling of romantic landscape painting. The setting sun is sometimes seen as a beautiful bird, a flamingo, dropping into her nest at nightfall, and sometimes as a more purely mythical bird.

He writes of *The Courtship of Miles Standish*:

There is only one sunset in *The Courtship*—for this is a poem about beginnings—but there are two fine sunrises, and the more splendid of these is the sunrise on the morning of the wedding when the sun appears out of the sea like Aaron out of his tent.

Perhaps there is no harm in this kind of criticism, but also is there any point? If the last quotation leads into an observation of some interest on the oriental Old Testament opulence of one aspect of the puritan imagination, the point is muffled by the way in which Mr. Arvin has chosen to present it.

As a subject, Longfellow undoubtedly tempts his critics towards a certain obviousness, but one cannot help wishing that Mr. Arvin had resisted a little more. *Tales of a Wayside Inn* is probably Longfellow's most successful single book, and Mr. Arvin rightly points to Longfellow's skill in writing sustained narrative verse of a popular kind. The stories Longfellow gives us in this volume are, as everyone knows, put in the mouths of seven Americans who have met at the Red Horse Inn at Sudbury, Massachusetts. The idea of the framework comes of course out of Boccaccio and Chaucer, but one cannot help wondering what conceivable audience Arvin was writing for that he thought it in need of the following information: "There is no portrait here remotely comparable in vigor with that of the Wife of Bath, the Prioress, or the Pardoner; Longfellow's portraits, though they were drawn from actual individuals, are dim and sketchy side by side with these." Mr. Arvin expands the remark for more than a page.

The criticism of the shorter poems is no more satisfactory. Mr. Arvin offers a number of critical and descriptive commentaries on a few dozen poems by Longfellow. Some of his comments are detailed. But the cold fact remains that no amount of good will or artificial respiration can put the breath of life back into poems that are no longer viable. There are of course certain poems that we still admire and read with pleasure: "The Fire of Drift Wood," "The Tide Rises, The Tide Falls," "My

Lost Youth," "The Jewish Cemetery at Newport," and a few others. But the critical emphasis they should have received is lost in the indiscriminating welter of poems brought forward for analysis.

Nor is it always possible to agree with Mr. Arvin's particular judgments, even within the context of the Longfellow canon. During his lifetime Longfellow was the most popular poet in America, and his mass audience had an admirable instinct for picking out as its favourite pieces poems with a crudely sentimental or didactic life. However one may wish to qualify it, life was there. I am far from sharing Mr. Arvin's contempt for "Excelsior," "The Village Blacksmith," and "A Psalm of Life." He prefers, as specifically opposed to them, "The Light of Stars," which seems to me an offensive poem. He finds in "The Light of Stars" a nice balance "between the confession of suffering and the voice of the resisting will." But surely this is to contribute a complexity that is by no means present in the poem. Here are the last three verses:

The star of the unconquered will,
He rises in my breast,
Serene, and resolute, and still,
And calm, and self-possessed.

And thou, too, whosoe'er thou art,
That readest this brief psalm,
As one by one thy hopes depart,
Be resolute and calm.

O fear not in a world like this,
And thou shalt know ere long,
Know how sublime a thing it is
To suffer and be strong.

Longfellow had his own griefs, and one respects them; but one can only reply to this, Tell it to the concentration camps of the twentieth century, or (in our great democratic phrase) to the victims of your choice. It is impossible to say whether one's teeth are put more on edge by the woolly syntax or the bogus moral superiority that is nothing less than insulting.

On the other hand, the three poems that Mr. Arvin condemns in the comparison are among the few through which a decided charm still shines. I have always admired the gallant youth bearing "A banner with the strange device, Excelsior!" It is easy to understand why Thurber once drew a set of illustrations of him. Unlike "The Light of Stars" there is nothing invidious in its moral tone. Indeed, the attitude expressed there probably has a certain validity for the imagination of brave boys of very tender age. The verse is much more effective than is usual with Longfellow, and the mounting action is as sharp and

straight as a sky-pointing icicle. I fail to see why one should object to the over-purity and simplification of motive. One is not concerned with human beings here, but with charming dolls. Like some of Dryden's heroic tragedies, it ought to be acted on the stage of an elegant puppet theatre. It is easy to visualize the final apotheosis (which really has a good deal of style) against the background of an Alp two feet high:

There in the twilight cold and gray,
Lifeless, but beautiful he lay,
And from the sky, serene and far,
A voice fell, like a falling star,
Excelsior!

While "A Psalm of Life" may be an inferior poem, it is difficult to join whole-heartedly in Mr. Arvin's total condemnation. In certain of the verses there is an intensification of the cliché that approaches originality, and a resounding authority in dealing with the obvious that commands assent. I particularly like the fourth verse:

Art is long, and Time is fleeting,
And our hearts though stout and brave,
Still, like muffled drums, are beating
Funeral marches to the grave.

The echo from Henry King's "Exequy" is probably unconscious:

But hark! My Pulse like a soft Drum,
Beats my approach, tells *Thee* I come,
And slow howe'er my marches be,
I shall at last sit down by *Thee*.

The surprising thing is the staunch way in which Longfellow's lines, coarsened, even vulgarized as they are, refuse to be utterly extinguished by the comparison.

As for "The Village Blacksmith," there is less "slack commonplace" in it than in many of the poems Mr. Arvin prefers. There is a direct simple authority in the description of the Blacksmith that even approaches style, just possibly by way of "The Ancient Mariner":

His hair is crisp, and black, and long,
His face is like the tan;
His brow is wet with honest sweat,
He earns whate'er he can,
And looks the whole world in the face,
For he owes not any man.

If the sixth and eighth verses may be condemned as exceptionally sentimental and didactic, the moral sentiment in the rest of the poem is no more exaggerated than in Goldsmith's "The Deserted Village." Most of the verses are rhythmically and visually strong, and it would be unwise to ask much more of Longfellow.

Mr. Arvin praises "The Goblet of Life" because he finds in it "an almost Hardy-esque harshness." On the other hand, he disdains "The Children's Hour." But "The Children's Hour" resembles Walter de la Mare's most characteristic poems so closely it might have been written by the later poet, and it seems to me as much a matter for praise to resemble Walter de la Mare as to resemble Hardy.

If one is going to write a book on Longfellow it is precisely his popular successes—what Mr. Arvin calls his "inferior" poems—that have to be faced. They are not important poems—not always even good poems—but they can still move when prodded. "The Building of the Ship," one of Mr. Arvin's favourite pieces, seems to me totally inert. It is difficult not to think that, faced with the problem of finding anything relevant or exciting to say about the poems, the chance to speak of literary influences (in this case, Schiller), and symbols (the ship, rather as an afterthought, stands for the Union) may have proved seductive. At any rate, it was unlucky that Mr. Arvin brought up Whitman:

It is what Whitman would call a Song for Occupations—for one Occupation of course—and it abounds in the materials of construction. . . . Almost as Whitman, one hears the sound of axes and mallets plied "with vigorous arms" . . .

"A Song for Occupations" is by no means one of Whitman's great poems, but it grows out of an overpowering central impulse or perception, just as "Song of Myself" does. Life is pervasive in it, as in a spring orchard. The genre painting of Longfellow's poem is all brown varnish beside it.

Several years ago Mr. Arvin published in *The Hudson Review* an essay on Emerson that seemed to me one of the most perceptive discussions of him I had read, and to deserve a special place in Emerson criticism along with Santayana's luminous essay in *Poetry and Religion*. This is the kind of distinction one rightly associates with Mr. Arvin, and one regrets that he did not choose Emerson rather than Longfellow as the subject of his last book. Longfellow would never willingly have betrayed a friendly biographer and critic, but one cannot escape the feeling that this is what has happened. American literature is in Mr. Arvin's debt. Probably the best way to pay it is simply to acknowledge that *Longfellow* is inferior to the three earlier biographies which deserve, and will have, a classic status in their field.

WILLIAM DICKEY

Hopes for Explosions

READING THESE TEN BOOKS OF POETRY,¹ I have been led to wonder what it is I expect a poem, ideally, to do, what standard I am employing when I arrive at the conclusion that one poem is wholly successful, another of momentary interest, another bad.

My answer, now at least, would be that I expect the poem to be knowledgeable, intelligent, and seriously involved with its subject. I expect it to talk clearly about that subject, rather than to reserve or conceal meaning. I want to be able to hear the poem, to know that it is consistently interesting in terms of sound. And I want the ratio of language to meaning to be as high as possible, the most happening in the least space and in the simplest language that will serve; I want experience, observation, emotion to be concentrated tighter and tighter, until in a sudden release of energy the poem achieves an explosion of meaning, a moment when everything means in a new, serious, instantaneous way.

This is perhaps as much a moral as a literary requirement, but surely a great poem does change our world, and whether such a change happens is one of the ways we decide if the poem is really great. At the end of "Sunday Morning" the world has been newly understood, and that understanding rightly and fully expressed; the subject has used up all the language, and nothing is left outside. The end of "Among School Children" is an even clearer case, because a larger world is involved; more elements have been packed into the moment of the explosion. When Cleopatra says "Dost thou not see my baby at my breast, / That sucks the nurse asleep?" the language is simple, as crucial language often is, but the implications are enormous; the simple phrase is able to release a complex meaning.

Admittedly, poetry cannot consist of such moments alone, lest the reader be left exhausted. And admittedly, there are other things poetry can properly do. But I think one judges the success of these other things in terms of the ideal possibility, the moment of concentration and conviction.

¹ TO MIX WITH TIME, by *May Swenson*. Scribner's. \$3.50. THE NEXT ROOM OF THE DREAM, by *Howard Nemerov*. University of Chicago Press. \$5.00. SEXTINA FOR A FAR-OFF SUMMER, by *Richmond Lattimore*. University of Michigan Press. \$3.75. A WORLD, by *William Burford*. University of Texas Press. \$2.75. GLAD AND SORRY SEASONS, by *Leonard Nathan*. Random House. \$3.50. WORKS AND DAYS AND OTHER POEMS, by *Irving Feldman*. Little, Brown. \$3.95. NEW ENGLAND SUITE, by *Charles Philbrick*. Clarke and Way. \$4.50. LATER POEMS, by *Austin Clarke*. Oxford University Press. \$4.25. VOYAGES FROM TROY, by *Ronald Perry*. The Mariner Press. \$3.50. THE BRANCH WILL NOT BREAK, by *James Wright*. Wesleyan University Press. \$1.45.

Such moments do occur in the poems considered here, and the fact of their occurrence makes me think some of the poets better than others. None of them is entirely bad; their work shows the ubiquity of technical competence at the present time; clearly they are informed, they know what poetry is about.

I was most impressed by May Swenson, least by Charles Philbrick, and a comparison of passages may show why. Here is Miss Swenson on sunflowers:

Great umber faces
headdressed in flames—round
ruffed faces, Indian and profound,
on totem stalks thick as maces—

stared: a company of giant
sunflowers. Like eclipses of the sun,
their plate-heads, almost black, spun
within the yellow aureoles: only the pliant

broad leaves sagged on their spikes in the heat.

Here is Philbrick on the national flower of New England:

Violet, daisy, sweet-william and blackeyed susan, sea-rose,
Queen-anne's-lace, the goldenrod, sumac and orient hydrangea
Unbelieved, but brought home by new-bearded son with new
judgment in eyes—
Like lilac, no bride was declared in the cargo; columbine,
laurel
And honeysuckle, trumpet-vine, buttercup—all these combine
To make the regional flower . . .

Miss Swenson has met the first of my requirements: she is intelligent and serious about sunflowers; to her, they are worth observing, and consequently she makes them new. She has also met the requirement of concentration; there is nothing here that does not advance the exactness of the description. The variety of rhyme and the precise management of sound relationship make the passage function for the ear. The language is charged; it can lead in the direction of the explosion.

Philbrick does not seem really concerned with flowers at all, only with the names of flowers; as a result, his language is empty of substance. Miss Swenson's sunflowers almost become alive; Philbrick's "new-bearded son with new judgment in eyes" is realized with so little particularity that he is less vital than the mixed flora that surround him.

What I admire in Miss Swenson's work is the combination of seriousness and care; her poems are involved in finding out things that matter, first by careful observation, then by considering the observation's meaning, as in "Fireflies":

Fireflies throw
love winks
to their kind
on the dark, glow
without heat,
their day bodies
common beetles.
In a planetarium
of the mind
sparks lit
when logic has gone
down
faint in the dawn
of intellect.
Instinct
makes luminous
the insect.
Idea's anonymous
ordinary mark,
that cryptic
in daylight crept,
can rise an asterisk
astonishing others out.
If the secret
of the dark
be kept,
an eagerness
in smallest, fiercest
hints
can scintillate.

The seriousness with which Miss Swenson observes and comments is reflected also in her attitude toward form. Many of these poems take new and surprising shapes, as Miss Swenson tries to see what new force can be given a word by placing it in an unexpected position. Miss Swenson solidifies abstractions, catches a frog, observes the Arno, and does all these things well and intently. And her seriousness is not ponderous.

I was also impressed by Richmond Lattimore and Howard Nemerov, partly because of their ability to make poems out of material I should

have thought recalcitrant. "A Theme from Thomas Hobbes" is a forbidding title for a poem, yet from it Lattimore can extract a conclusion as quiet and controlled as this:

And the sense decayed
and that was memory, and what was left when memory
decayed too was imagination, and the musty smell
of the garden, which remember is you and I,
is faded sense.

And here is the beginning of Nemerov's startling "The Dial Tone":

A moment of silence, first, then there it is.
But not as though it only now began
Because of my attention; rather, this,
That I begin at one point on its span
Brief kinship with its endless going on.

Apart from this shared virtuosity of imagination, and a concern with the world of civilization, arts, literature, the poets are quite different, and their successes gained largely in opposite ways. Lattimore does best with high seriousness and a taut brutality of statement, as in the first part of "Good-bye Summer Good-bye Good-bye" which seems to me the best poem in his book:

Like dolls on their little mile
of sand they walked, hand
closed on a finger of hand,
in a silent struggle of doubt
of the facts of love. And they did,
and they thought. And it all went out.
A tick of a watch, and it slid
and was gone for good and all,
though glance cut through glance and smile
and gray gaze to incise
love's effigy in the air
of the mind, fix there
forever the facts of eyes,
the skinfeel, the circumstance
of marriage, the stuff
of the act that slips away.
To remember will be enough
if they can remember today.

But it's gone, it won't stay.

The sense of stripped language makes much of Lattimore exciting, as when he describes a medieval helmet ("a sloped and snouted can/ to help him keep his brains inside his face") or the world of Poussin:

Here a young woman with no clothes on, mild,
marmoreal, hairless, handsome, dignified,
decants into an equally undressed child
(too young to walk, yet soon to be pie-eyed)
splashed wine.

Lattimore's failures come when he assumes an artificial ingenuousness, or when he does not keep his language fluid: "our ciders juiced in such tight balls as these/before their rot . . ." He also has a few poems which are too mildly occasional.

Nemerov's language moves more toward particularity and the colloquial; where Lattimore is successful at dignifying small matters, making them serious, Nemerov cuts the elaborate down to size, as with Lot's description of his wife:

We'd been forbidden to look, of course,
But equally of course my old girl had to look.
She turned around, and in one minute there
She was, a road sign or a mileage marker.

As long as he maintains the colloquial language and ironic tone, Nemerov is in no trouble. He can brilliantly compare Fontenelle to a dynamo, desecrate Santa Claus ("At Easter, he's anonymous again,/ Just one of the crowd lunching on Calvary") and deal with the absurdities of the contemporary world. It is when he attempts conscious dignity that he seems unsure of himself, as with both of the verse plays included here. The figures remain inanimate, Saul especially so:

Beware. My business now is with the woman.
My dear, now that you know I am the king,
You must do what I ask, your mystery,
For nothing less will do. Deal honestly,
My oath protects you. Once more put me off
With prophecies of long life and success,
As flatterers do, as you have tried to do,
Your life pays for it.

This does not mean that Nemerov is restricted to satire, only that he seems more at ease keeping some distance between himself and his subject matter. The sort of commentary he does with great skill, exact and frightening, is shown in "Blue Suburban":

Out in the elegy country, summer evenings,
 It used to be always six o'clock, or seven,
 Where the fountain of the willow always wept
 Over the lawn, where the shadows crept longer
 But came no closer, where the talk was brilliant,
 The laughter friendly, where they all were young
 And taken by the darkness in surprise
 That night should come and the small lights go on
 In the lonely house down in the elegy country,
 Where the bitter things were said and the drunken friends
 Steadied themselves away in their courses
 For industrious ruin or casual disaster
 Under a handful of pale, permanent stars.

Although the subjects and styles of William Burford, Irving Feldman, and Leonard Nathan are different, the extent of their accomplishment is similar, and less than that of Miss Swenson, Lattimore or Nemerov. Fewer phrases stand out sharply, there is less sense of assured voice. And while (in Feldman and Burford) language is often cut back to spareness, I do not usually find the concentration explosive, perhaps because the ideas are too familiar or too small. There are successful poems in each of these books, but the successes are more sporadic.

What Burford does well is shown in "The Swimmers":

From pools the smooth bodies of the swimmers come,
 Clothed, but still glowing, the immortal sons,
 Their skin from the milky semen born.

For an hour or so, they hold that aura;
 Then something either sinks, or is worn from them—
 Falling to lust, and human argument.

What he fails at is shown in another short poem, "The World":

Stands beautiful before the mind;
 In a land of fir trees
 The silver planes of man
 Shine on their field:

Eternal, the dark trees;
 The planes, things of this time;
 Each equally beautiful
 In a vision of life.

The second poem seems flaccid, its contrast of images conventional,

its intellectual content pedestrian. Burford eludes the necessity of *making* the object important; he merely presents it and assumes its importance. The result is too easy, because there is none of the recalcitrance of actuality to be dealt with, no sense that the object and the comment should be related in a tense way. One could substitute other images for those Burford chooses, and the comment would still work the same way. The first poem is the better one, because object and comment work for each other.

Not all of Burford's poems share this vagueness, but enough do to make me suspect he is satisfied with a language of connotation only, where the hard body of denotation is not required. Such a position leads, I am afraid, to imprecise thoughts and images.

With Leonard Nathan's poetry, it is the smoothness of the surface of the language that disturbs me, the sense that objects cannot exist in surprising or shocking nakedness, but must be lapped in sound.

I might not have this objection if I were reading the poems singly, instead of all together, for the problem is that Nathan has a continuous language that is used for all subjects, and maintains much the same tone. Here is a description of Aphrodite:

She wore for jewels the water's afterbirth,
Her tidal hair oozed green-gold as it fell,
Her face was fresh as any cold young girl's;
But her naked presence was a massive bell—
Unbearable until it finally tolled.

Here is a description of an aged Roman whore:

Poor bitch at the alley's pissing end alone,
While dew-backed children beat the sweaty bush,
Indifferent as the neuter starving moon.

Is there enough difference between these passages, considering the difference of the subjects? Nathan's language, more serious and more adept than Burford's, achieves finally something of the same effect, because, speaking of all objects the same way, it makes them seem identical in value.

Fortunately, the tone is sometimes changed, usually when Nathan speaks of actual people, a student or a grandmother. Too often Nathan's poetry shows a tension between elevation of language and a deprecatory attitude; the two cancel each other out and arrive at neutrality. I'd prefer to see less neatness, less continuity, more passages like the conclusion of "The Diver":

I close my eyes till dark
When one low whistle is my sign to creep

To where she lies, and like a long-blind seer,
 Feeling his way to truth, I then go deep
 Down that steep burrow, under musky fur,
 Where captains of pure reason die like sheep,
 To find this gripping earth alive with her.

The most impressive of Feldman's poems is the "Goya" sequence, of which the first section, "Man," is particularly forceful:

The soldiers bear a sack,
 A white sack without a tear;
 The soldiers are in black.
 For the rest, the plain is bare.
 And what else *should* be there?

They carry the sack,
 They do the best they can;
 One in his arms, other on his back.
 Are these animals that feed on bran?
 No. They are men. This is a man.

The next to last line of this section shows Feldman's characteristic handling of language, the reverse of Nathan's. Feldman breaks up patterns, agitates them, introduces dissonance. He does this in the teeth of a very structural poetry, where poems come not singly, but in architectural groups, where paintings or statues or myths are balanced against each other. Such poetry may easily seem static; that Feldman's doesn't is perhaps the result of the dissonances.

What is unusual about Feldman's poetry is that it seems to be more at home with Goya or Herodotus than with Feldman; it seems as much learned as experienced. With objects that are distant Feldman achieves a tight control, as at the end of "The Syracusan Expedition":

That night the sailors bed their ships at Pylos
 And gather at a fire, their chests yet rich
 With the wine of beginnings. But the infant
 Fate, already grown so tall, bends over
 Cylon, the Chian archer, and strikes his face.

When the subject is immediate in time, as in "To a Third-Generation Israeli Girl," Feldman descends to rhetoric:

O Batia, this irony's too great,
 Nothing will contain it! madness sours
 The earth, and furrows vomit seed and state . . .

I hope Feldman's poetry is moving toward a union of control and personal experience, an ability to deal with contemporary life in the spare, resonant language he already brings to bear on antiquity. Of these three books, his is markedly the most various in its experiments, and consequently the one which shows most future possibility.

The three remaining poets I cannot group; they are not much like one another, or like the poets considered above.

Of them, the most apparently foreign is Austin Clarke, whose Ireland is not as familiar as, I should have thought, Yeats and Joyce would have made it. The foreignness exists first because much of the work is topical and local, second because Clarke sometimes delights in allusion, and his allusions are not to the general body of western myth and literature, but to the specifically Irish one.

What does come through clearly is of two sorts: satire, or a ballad-like innocent vision of the Irish past. The first sort is shown by "Irish-American Dignitary":

Glanced down at Shannon from the sky-way
 With his attendant clergy, stayed night
 In Dublin, but whole day with us
 To find his father's cot, now dust
 And rubble, bless new church, school buildings
 At Glantworth, drive to Spangle Hill
 And cut first sod, hear, answer, fine speeches,
 Accept a learned gown, freedom
 Of ancient city, so many kissing
 His ring—God love him!—almost missed
 The waiting liner: that day in Cork
 Had scarcely time for knife and fork.

The second tone is present in the opening of "The Straying Student":

On a holy day when sails were blowing southward,
 A bishop sang the Mass at Inishmore,
 Men took one side, their wives were on the other
 But I heard the woman coming from the shore:
 And wild in despair my parents cried aloud
 For they saw the vision draw me to the doorway.

This kind of work is more accessible than some of Clarke's set pieces, the "big" poems where a concentration on technical complexity and loading the piece with meaning can lead to abrupt and difficult verse:

The nasal syllable in Houyhnhnm
 Brings rhyme-word. Minim, semibreve

Are here to grieve me with the last snap
 Of silk string, clap of violin case.
 Child sat, played in a self.

What most separates Clarke's work from the American poetry is its sense of being written for an audience at hand, attentive, informed, who can appreciate an epigram both for its place in a tradition of such verse, and for its appropriateness to an immediate occasion. Clarke plays more games with rhyme (including some Hudibrastic rhyme that goes to the bounds of credulity) than the Americans, in the apparent assurance that the game will be understood.

The thing to do with Ronald Perry's *Voyages from Troy* is to read through it very rapidly, and not think about it too much. The poetry intends to be beautiful and evocative; it exists in tones of gold and jewelry, in long suspensions, in montage and passionless metamorphoses:

... Only

Shells like grapes out of the ripe rock, and the women at their harvest of stones, picking and pulling; over them insects flying in a gold cloud out of the sun;

Gold glimmering, and undersea a heart out of a green stone made; fish darting, insects whirring—grasshoppers, dragonflies, deadly as wasps.

The poetry can have an hypnotic effect, as long as questions of precise definition are not asked of it, and as long as the tone is unbroken. But there are some breaks, mostly in the lyric or dramatic passages which alternate with the descriptive ones, and for me the trance quickly dissolves when I come upon this exchange between Odysseus and Nausicaa:

He.

Was dead, sea driven and drift.
 Of all my worlds, only sea was left.
 Fish swam in my veins.

She.

I'd like to swim in your veins!

Perhaps Perry's method of melting, elaborate images will work only when it is not attached to something as substantial as a particular man.

James Wright's new book has moved away from a poetry of explanation to a poetry of suggestion; image rather than comment is intended to do the work. Sometimes this method works handsomely, as in "In Fear of Harvests":

It has happened
Before: nearby,
The nostrils of slow horses
Breathe evenly,
And the brown bees drag their high garlands,
Heavily,
Toward hives of snow

Sometimes, though, the image does not seem adequate, and I am left feeling that more was intended than was said.

The book depresses me, because of its sense of failure and loss, of a defeated life in which, if happiness is to exist, it will do so only briefly. The world of man shown here seems largely horrible, and only the uncomplicated world of animals, of physical nature, offers relief. Even that world is sometimes involved in the human images, as in the coldly terrible ending of "American Wedding":

Now she is going to learn
How it is that animals
Can save time:
They sleep a whole season
Of lamentation and snow,
Without bothering to weep.

From his first book, Wright's poetry struck me as extraordinary and beautiful, as containing the sudden moments of pure excitement that I spoke of at the beginning of this review. The moments are still there, but now they are muted by the sadness, diminished, brought down. Wright has the clear vision, the exactness, the pure language of poetry; I would give him happiness, if I could.

PATRICK CRUTTWELL

Two Critics¹

AUDEN'S BOOK IS A MISCELLANY of critical writings—articles, lectures, reviews, introductions. They are not just reprinted as they were written or spoken in the first instance; some of them, apparently, have been chopped up into “sets of notes,” and all are rearranged and redistributed according to some principle which clearly has meaning for the author—he would like the chapters “to be read in sequence”—though I confess the meaning eluded me. The subjects are many and various. Shakespeare, Italian opera and the translating of libretti, *Pickwick Papers* and Nathanael West, “Notes on the Comic” and “Christianity and Art”—these are a few of them.

There emerge unmistakably some qualities not as common in contemporary criticism as they should be: a sense of enjoyment and unforced interest, the feel of an individual personality, and the signs of a living mind, fertile in ideas and always ready, indeed eager, to expose itself to new experiences. There is nothing here of that freezing-up of taste which seems one of the occupational afflictions of academic criticism. One or two of the pieces are almost wholly admirable: in particular, for me, the essays on Shakespeare's *Henry IV* and Byron's *Don Juan*. And the incidental notes and aphorisms, on writing and reading, on poetry and on being a poet in the twentieth century, and so forth, contain quite as high a proportion of hits as one should look for in this kind of quick-fire criticism. So let me say at once that I enjoyed the reading of this volume and learned from it.

—But having said that, why must I say next that in the end I was left with a feeling of uneasiness and dissatisfaction and even with a tinge of distaste? These are not new impressions; they are the impressions that the reading of Auden has always made on me. Seeking for their reason, I am reminded of that devastating bodyblow which George Orwell landed more than twenty years ago—a blow from which, on the eastern shores of the Atlantic in any case, its victim's reputation has never entirely recovered. Auden, wrote Orwell, is “the kind of person who is always somewhere else when the trigger is pulled.” When that was said (in 1940), the implication was insincerity. That implication is one which no literary critic should ever make; you can make it against someone you know as a person, but when you are judging a writer, the accusation to be made, if any, is not: “You are insincere,” but: “You are playing the wrong part, you are trying a style you can't manage.” (This accusation may be kinder to the person; it is far, far deadlier to the writer.) And this is what I feel about Auden. I could never accept

¹ THE DYER'S HAND, by W. H. Auden. Random House. \$7.50. PUZZLES AND EPIPHANIES, by Frank Kermode. Chilmark Press. \$4.95.

him in the part for which Orwell flayed him, that of Marxist revolutionary; nor can I now, in the part he plays today, that of Christian sage. Not for five minutes could I take either role with the smallest seriousness; I am naively astonished when others do take them seriously, and I have to fight hard against the temptation of doubting if Auden himself does.

And seeking again for the reasons, I find a hint in the fact that of all his many and various works, the one from which I myself have had most pleasure and profit is his *Oxford Book of Light Verse*. That is a masterpiece in its kind, the work of a magpie of genius, an exquisite connoisseur in the witty and odd. It is the creation of one whose true self is what I wish the English language would still let me call an *amateur* and a *dilettante*. It won't; for the words have gone down in the world—and how significant and sad that they have!—so that what used to mean a *lover* of, a *delighter* in, the arts, must now be applied, as the Oxford Dictionary puts it, “more or less depreciatively, to one who interests himself in an art or science merely as a pastime and without serious aim or study.” But if we could still use those words without “depreciation,” they would be the words for Auden. This is what he would be if he could: an aesthetic pleaser, an erudite fantasist. Read with this in mind, *The Dyer's Hand* does show a unifying principle. Running through it is the theme of “Eden”—Eden as the state in which man “may know love as love and not as the law,” in which “the self is satisfied whatever it demands, the ego is approved of whatever it chooses.” It is soon clear that this is not the Eden of theology (Milton's Adam would never be found in it), but of wish-fulfilment, and the wish it fulfils is that frivolity should not be frowned on by conscience. Who are the “experts on Eden”? Dickens (in *Pickwick*), Oscar Wilde, Firbank, and Wodehouse: the geniuses of the frivolous and absurd. All this, and much more—such as the whimsicalities of Auden's suggested College for Bards, where they will learn, inter alia, cooking and looking after a domestic animal—is perhaps telling us rather more than the author intends (though that is doubtful, for he is clearly a person of great self-awareness); and what it tells us is that this writer is really designed to be, or rather would like to be, a totally a-moral amuser. But in fact he is not only that; he has spoiled his talent by trying to be something more. And why?

For two reasons. First, that he works in an age and civilisation devoid of frivolous, eccentric, individual patronage. Patronage in our age is not individual, it comes from institutions and corporations; and if you want it now, if you want the Guggenheims and the Fords and the campuses to support you, you must be (or look) “serious.” And the second reason is that in our time it is not possible, quite apart from questions of support, for a writer to be only an amuser *and* to be intelligent, sensitive and erudite. His wretched conscience, his sense of obligation to the community, will not allow it. It forces him to put

on the airs of a moralist or prophet, political leader or reformer. Which Auden, dutifully, does. But with what bad grace! with what obvious unhappiness! See how the admirable essay on Falstaff has to have, tagged on its tail, a portentously irrelevant piece of theology—and that on Iago a similar piece about modern science! Contrast with these the basically irresponsible concept of the poet which appears in this: “All poets adore explosions, thunderstorms, tornadoes, conflagrations, ruins, scenes of spectacular carnage”—a passage which surely invites and deserves the Orwellian censure. For of course it is just not true. “All poets” do *not* enjoy “scenes of spectacular carnage.” *Some* poets—among whom presumably is Auden—enjoy long range daydreaming about them. And why not—if they don’t pretend that it’s anything more than daydreaming?

I wonder if it is only to an English reader that all this seems remarkably English? I can say, at any rate, that to one such reader Auden seems still as completely English as Henry James has always seemed completely American; his assumption, so to speak, of an American accent merely points it. And this quality I have been trying to analyse—this compound of an elusive eccentric whimsicality, always shifting unpredictably in and out of seriousness, and a deliberate amateurishness which is apt, disconcertingly, to reveal at moments a formidable learning and intelligence—this is surely a very characteristic export of the country which produced Prior and Gay, Lewis Carroll and Samuel Butler. Auden himself notes that all his “experts on Eden” are English; and I think he could have added to their names another, that of William Beckford. For I suspect that of all English writers Beckford is the one nearest to Auden’s daydream—Beckford of the vast fortune spectacularly dissipated, of Fonthill’s stupendous and soon-ruined Gothick, of *Vathek* and exotic travels, and the strange affair of young William Courtenay.

To go from Auden to Frank Kermode is to travel to a very different climate. Kermode is an academic critic, therefore more professional in one sense, in that criticism is at the centre of his work; less professional in another, for whereas a creative writer’s criticism is always, knowingly or not, serving the one same cause—which is to help or comment on his own creative work—it is not so easy to see the true cause behind a critic’s (and a professor’s) criticism. All the twenty-four essays in *Puzzles and Epiphanies* are concerned with writers of the twentieth century; almost all of them were originally reviews; and virtually all are reprinted unchanged. The book, in fact, follows a pattern much more conventional and familiar than Auden’s; and the difficulties it must encounter are also familiar. When you reprint a review, you are trying to cross the boundary between reviewing and criticism; and it is a real boundary, for reviewer and critic must start from assumptions so different that it is hard to be the latter if you have to be the former. The reviewer assumes that his readers have not yet read the book in

question; and he knows in fact (though no one must say so) that many of them will never read it. The critic says in effect: We have all read what I shall now talk about; and I shall imagine that *you* are talking back. The difference, pedagogically speaking, is that between a lecture and a seminar.

The boundary is an awkward one to cross; and I wouldn't say that Kermode, for all his readability and informativeness, can always avoid its pitfalls. Some of these essays, I greatly fear, will be taken—have been taken already by their *Encounter* and *Spectator* readers—not as guides to reading the books they treat of but as substitutes for reading them. That, it may be said, is hardly the essayist's fault. True: but I detect now and then a subconscious awareness of it and a shaping of the essay to fit it. Take the elaborate summaries of Musil's *Man without Qualities* and of Northrop Frye's *Anatomy of Criticism*: not much use, I would have thought, to those who have read or will read, but vastly useful to those who will talk about. Such "talking about," as we all know, is a besetting vice of us who write and you who read high-brow literary journalism. Another is smartness: a slick picking-up and brisk peddling of notions floating around us. On page 70 of this book we hear of Northrop Frye's idea "that the two great periods of tragedy correspond to the rise of Ionian and Renaissance science"; on page 220, in connection now with Lawrence Durrell, the idea pops up again as an impressively casual throw-away of the author's: "That is why our

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neo-classic age was also the age of deism, and, perhaps, why Greek science and Greek tragedy grew up together." It can't be helped: neither space nor time nor the kind of attention which a reviewer knows he will get make it possible for anyone altogether to avoid such glibnesses. Nor can he quite avoid a certain lack of incisiveness in judgment; for that is the obverse of a suspension of *final* judgment which is in itself highly desirable when the subject is contemporary work. Kermode is well aware that the evanescence of most of what a reviewer deals with transfers itself to his own judgment; he would be prepared for the fact that his opinion of Salinger in this book ("a fine artist") was going to change into the wonder he has recently expressed in the *New Statesman* that anyone had ever taken Salinger seriously.

These are the hazards of the reviewer's trade. He can never avoid them. But should he reprint them?

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